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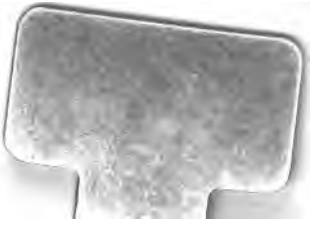
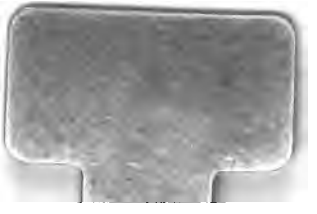
THE

MONTH OF MARY

ST. ALPHONSUS





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THE

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BY

ST. ALPHONSUS,

DOCTOR OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH.

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NOTICE.

THE present little book is taken exclusively from the *Glories of Mary*, and hence may fairly claim the title prefixed to it.

It was compiled by a Father of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, and widely circulated in Rome a few years since.

It is believed that it will not be unacceptable in its English form to those who are accustomed to practise the Devotion of the Month of Mary; whilst the title of Doctor of the Universal Church, lately conferred upon St. Alphonsus, gives new weight to his teaching in reference to the greatness and powerful intercession of the Blessed Mother of God, and to the necessity of having recourse to her protection.

Inasmuch as this little work is intended solely for spiritual reading and prayer, all references, whether to Holy Scripture or to authors, hav

been purposely omitted. Such references may be found in the *Glories of Mary*.

The Hymns are taken from the translation of the *Sacred Verses of St. Alphonsus*, published by Messrs. Burns and Co. in 1863.

R. A. C., C.SS.R.

St. Mary's, Clapham, March 23, 1872.

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FROM THE RACCOLTA.

SANCTIFICATION OF THE MONTH OF MAY.

It is a well-known devotion to consecrate to the most holy Mary the month of May, as the most beautiful month of the whole year. This devotion has long prevailed throughout Christendom; and it is common here in Rome, not only in private families, but as a public devotion in very many churches.

Pope Pius VII., in order to animate all Christian people to the practice of a devotion so tender and agreeable to the most Blessed Virgin, and calculated to be of such great spiritual benefit to themselves, granted March 21, 1815, to all the faithful of the Catholic world, who, either in public or in private, should honour the Blessed Virgin with some special homage or devout prayers, or other virtuous practices—

1st. An Indulgence of 300 days for each day.

2d. A Plenary Indulgence once in this month: to be gained on that day when, after Confession and Communion, they shall pray to God for the holy Church, &c.

These Indulgences were confirmed for ever by the same holy Pontiff by means of a decree of the S. Congr. of Indulgences, June 18, 1822, and are applicable to the holy souls in purgatory.

THE

MONTH OF MARY.

INTRODUCTION FOR THE THIRTIETH OF APRIL.

OF THE NECESSITY OF THE INTERCESSION OF MARY FOR OUR SALVATION.

It is an article of faith, not only that it is *lawful*, but also that it is *useful*, to invoke and pray to the Saints, and especially to the Queen of Saints, the most holy and ever Blessed Virgin Mary, in order that they may obtain us the Divine grace. This truth has been defined by General Councils, against heretics who condemned it as being injurious to Jesus Christ, who is our only Mediator. But if a Jeremias, after his death, prayed for Jerusalem; if the ancients of the Apocalypse presented the prayers of the Saints to God; if a St. Peter promises his disciples that after his

death he will be mindful of them; if a holy Stephen prays for his persecutors; if a St. Paul prays for his companions; if, in fine, the Saints can pray for us, why cannot we beseech the Saints to intercede for us? St. Paul recommends himself to the prayers of his disciples: 'Brethren, pray for us.' St. James exhorts us to pray one for another: 'Pray one for another, that you may be saved.' Then we can do the same.

No one denies that Jesus Christ is our only mediator of justice, and that He by His merits has obtained our reconciliation with God. But, on the other hand, it is impious to assert that God is not pleased to grant graces at the intercession of His Saints, and more especially of Mary, His Mother, whom Jesus desires so much to see loved and honoured by all. Hence the learned Suarez justly remarks, that if we implore our Blessed Lady to obtain us a favour, it is not because we distrust the Divine mercy, but rather that we fear our own unworthiness and the absence of proper dispositions; and we recommend ourselves to Mary, that her dignity may supply for our lowliness. That it is most useful and holy to have recourse to the intercession of Mary can only be doubted by those who have not faith. But that which we intend to prove here is, that the intercession of Mary is even necessary to salvation; we say

necessary, not absolutely, but morally. This necessity proceeds from the will itself of God, that all graces that He dispenses should pass by the hands of Mary, according to the opinion of St. Bernard, and which we may now with safety call the general opinion of theologians and learned men.

But let us examine what the Saints say on the subject. St. Bernard says, 'That God has filled Mary with all graces, so that men may receive by her means, as by a channel, every good thing that comes to them.' He says, 'that she is a full aqueduct, that others may receive of her plenitude.' On this the Saint makes the following significant remark: 'Before the birth of the Blessed Virgin, a constant flow of graces was wanting, because this aqueduct did not exist.' But now that Mary has been given to the world, heavenly graces constantly flow through her on all. And on this account she is called the Moon, according to the following remark of St. Bonaventure: 'As the moon, which stands between the sun and the earth, transmits to this latter whatever she receives from the former, so does Mary pour out upon us who are in this world the heavenly graces that she receives from the Divine Sun of justice.' Again, the holy Church calls her 'the happy gate of heaven;' for as the same St. Bernard remarks, 'As every mandate

of grace that is sent by a king passes by the palace gates, so does every grace that comes from heaven to the world pass through the hands of Mary.' St. Bonaventure says that Mary is called 'the gate of heaven because no one can enter that blessed kingdom without passing by her.'

And thus Father Suarez concludes that it is the sentiment of the universal Church 'that the intercession and prayers of Mary are, above those of all others, not only useful, but necessary.' Necessary, in accordance with what we have already said, not with an absolute necessity; for the mediation of Jesus Christ alone is absolutely necessary; but with a moral necessity; for the Church believes with St. Bernard, that God has determined that no grace shall be granted otherwise than by the hands of Mary. 'God wills,' says the Saint, 'that we should have nothing that has not passed by the hands of Mary;' and before St. Bernard, St. Ildephonsus asserted the same thing, addressing the Blessed Virgin in the following terms: 'O Mary, God has decided on committing all good gifts, that He has provided for men, to thy hands; and, therefore, He has intrusted all treasures and riches of grace to thee.' And hence St. Peter Damian remarks, 'That God would not become man without the consent of Mary; in the first place, that we

might feel ourselves under great obligations to her; and in the second, that we might understand that the salvation of all is left to the care of this Blessed Virgin.'

St. Bonaventure, on the words of the Prophet Isaias, 'And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root, and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him,' makes a beautiful remark, saying: 'Whoever desires the sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit, let him seek for the flower of the Holy Ghost in the rod,'—that is, for Jesus in Mary; 'For by the rod we find the flower, and by the flower, God.' And he adds: 'If you desire to possess this flower, bend down the rod, which bears the flower, by prayer; and so you will obtain it. Otherwise,' says the seraphic Father, 'in vain shall we seek Jesus unless we endeavour to find Him with Mary.' St. Ildephonsus also says: 'I desire to be the servant of the Son; but because no one will ever be so without serving the Mother, I desire to be the servant of Mary.'

EXAMPLE.

In Germany a man fell into a grievous sin; through shame he was unwilling to confess it, but, on the other hand, unable to endure the remorse of his conscience, he went to throw

himself into a river. On the point of doing so he hesitated, and, weeping, he begged that God would forgive him his sin without his confessing it. One night in his sleep he felt some one shake his arm, and heard a voice which said, *Go to confession.* He went to the church, but yet did not confess. On another night he again heard the same voice. He returned to the church; but when he got there, he declared that he would rather die than confess that sin. But before returning home, he went to recommend himself to the most Blessed Virgin, whose image was in that church. He had no sooner knelt down than he found himself quite changed. He immediately got up, called a confessor, and, weeping bitterly through the grace which he had received from Mary, made an entire confession of his sins; and he afterwards declared that he experienced greater satisfaction than had he obtained all the treasures of the world.

PRAYER.

O my soul, see what a sure hope of salvation and eternal life our Lord has given thee, by having in His mercy inspired thee with confidence in the patronage of His Mother; and this, notwithstanding that so many times, by thy sins, thou hast merited His displeasure and

hell. Thank thy God, and thank thy protectress, Mary, who has condescended to take thee under her mantle; for of this thou mayest be well convinced, after the many graces that thou hast received by her means. O yes, I do thank thee, my most loving Mother, for all thou hast done for me, who am deserving of hell. And from how many dangers hast thou not delivered me, O Queen! How many inspirations and mercies hast thou not obtained for me from God? What service, what honour, have I ever rendered thee, that thou shouldst do so much for me?

I know that it is thy sole goodness that has impelled thee. Ah, too little would it be, in comparison with all that I owe thee, did I shed my blood and give my life for thee! for thou hast delivered me from eternal death; thou hast enabled me, as I hope, to recover Divine grace; to thee, in fine, I owe all I have. My most amiable Lady, I, poor wretch that I am, can make thee no return, but that of always loving and praising thee. Ah, disdain not to accept the tender affection of a poor sinner, who is inflamed with love for thy goodness. If my heart is unworthy to love thee, because it is impure and filled with earthly affections, it is thou who must change it. Ah, change it, then! Bind me to my God, and bind me so that I may never more have it in

my power to separate myself from His love. Thou askest of me that I should love thy God, and I ask of thee that thou shouldst obtain this love for me, to love Him always; this is all that I desire. Amen.

THE FIRST DAY.

OF MARY'S FAITH.

As the Blessed Virgin is the Mother of holy love and hope, so also is she the Mother of faith: 'I am the Mother of fair love, and of fear, and of knowledge, and of holy hope.' And with reason is she so, says St. Ireneus, for 'the evil done by Eve's incredulity was remedied by Mary's faith.' This is confirmed by Tertullian, who says, that because Eve, contrary to the assurance she had received from God, believed the serpent, she brought death into the world; but our Queen, because she believed the angel when he said that she, remaining a Virgin, would become the Mother of God, brought salvation into the world. For St. Augustine says, that 'when Mary consented to the incarnation of the Eternal Word, by means of her faith she opened heaven to men.' Father Suarez says, that the most holy Virgin had more faith than all men and angels. She saw her Son in the crib of Bethlehem, and believed Him the Creator of the world. She saw Him fly from Herod, and yet believed Him the King

of kings. She saw Him born, and believed Him eternal. She saw Him poor and in need of food, and believed Him the Lord of the universe. She saw Him lying on straw, and believed Him omnipotent. She observed that He did not speak, and she believed Him infinite wisdom. She heard Him weep, and believed Him the joy of paradise. In fine, she saw Him in death, despised and crucified, and although faith wavered in others, Mary remained firm in the belief that He was God. On these words of the Gospel, 'There stood by the cross of Jesus His Mother,' St. Antoninus says: 'Mary stood supported by her faith, which she retained firm, in the Divinity of Christ.' Hence blessed Albert the Great assures us, that 'Mary then exercised perfect faith; for even when the disciples were doubting, she did not doubt.' Therefore Mary merited, by her great faith, to become 'the light of all the faithful,' as St. Methodius calls her, and the 'Queen of the true faith,' as she is called by St. Cyril of Alexandria. The holy Church herself attributes to the merits of Mary's faith the destruction of all heresies: 'Rejoice, O Virgin Mary; for thou alone hast destroyed all heresies throughout the world!' St. Thomas of Villanova, explaining the words of the Holy Ghost, 'Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse, . . . with one of

thy eyes,' says that 'these eyes denoted Mary's faith, by which she greatly pleased the Son of God.'

St. Ildephonsus exhorts us to imitate Mary's faith. But how can we do so? Faith, at the same time that it is a gift, is also a virtue. It is a gift of God, inasmuch as it is a light infused by Him into our souls; and a virtue, inasmuch as the soul has to exercise itself in the practice of it. Hence faith is not only to be the rule of our belief, but also that of our actions; therefore St. Gregory says, 'He truly believes who puts what he believes in practice.' And St. Augustine: 'Thou sayest, I believe; do what thou sayest, and it is faith.' This is to have a lively faith, to live according to our belief: 'My just man liveth by faith.' Thus did the Blessed Virgin live very differently from those who do not live in accordance with what they believe, and whose faith is dead, as St. James declares: 'Faith without works is dead.' Diogenes sought for a man on earth; but God, amongst the many faithful, seems to seek for a Christian; for few there are who have good works; the greater part have only the name of Christian. To such as these should be applied the words once addressed by Alexander to a cowardly soldier who was also named Alexander: 'Either change thy name or change thy conduct.'

But, as Father Avila used to say, 'It would be better to shut up these poor creatures as madmen, believing, as they do, that an eternity of happiness is prepared for those who lead good lives, and an eternity of misery for those who lead bad ones, and who yet live as if they believed nothing.' St. Augustine therefore exhorts us to see things with the eyes of Christians—that is to say, with eyes which look at all in the light of faith; for, as St. Teresa often said, all sins come from a want of faith.

EXAMPLE.

St. Stanislaus Kostka, who was wholly dedicated to the love of Mary, happened, on the 1st of August 1568, to hear a sermon from the blessed Peter Canisius, in which he exhorted the novices of the society with great earnestness to live each month as if it were to be the last of their lives, and the one during which they were to be presented before the tribunal of God. After the sermon, St. Stanislaus told his companions that that advice had been for him, in an especial manner, the voice of God; for that he was to die in the course of that very month. It is evident, from what followed, that he said this either because God had expressly revealed it to him, or at least because He gave him a certain internal

presentiment of it. Four days afterwards the blessed youth went with Father Emanuel to St. Mary Major's. The conversation fell on the approaching Feast of the Assumption, and the Saint said: 'Father, I believe that on that day a new paradise is seen in paradise, as the glory of the Mother of God, crowned Queen of heaven, and seated so near to our Lord, above all the choirs of angels, is seen. And if—as I firmly believe it to be—this festival is renewed every year, I hope to see the next.' The glorious martyr St. Lawrence had fallen by lot to St. Stanislaus as his patron for that month, it being customary in the society thus to draw them. It is said that he wrote a letter to his Mother Mary, in which he begged her to obtain him the favour to be present at her next festival in heaven. On the Feast of St. Lawrence he received the holy Communion, and afterwards entreated the Saint to present his letter to the Divine Mother, and to support his petition with his intercession, that the most Blessed Virgin might graciously accept and grant it. Towards the close of that very day he was seized with fever; and though the attack was slight, he considered that certainly he had obtained the favour asked for. This indeed he joyfully expressed, and with a smiling countenance, on going to bed, said: 'From this bed I shall never rise again.' And

speaking to Father Claudius Aquaviva, he added: 'Father, I believe that St. Lawrence has already obtained me the favour from Mary, to be in heaven on the feast of her Assumption.' No one, however, took much notice of his words. On the vigil of the feast his illness still seemed of little consequence; but the Saint assured a brother that he should die that night. 'O, brother,' the other answered, 'it would be a greater miracle to die of so slight an illness than to be cured.' Nevertheless, in the afternoon he fell into a deathlike swoon; a cold sweat came over him, and he lost all his strength. The superior hastened to him; and Stanislaus entreated him to have him laid on the bare floor, that he might die as a penitent. To satisfy him, this was granted. He was laid on a thin mattress on the ground. He then made his confession; and in the midst of the tears of all present received the Viaticum. I say of the tears of all present; for when the Divine Sacrament was brought into the room, his eyes brightened up with celestial joy, and his whole countenance was inflamed with holy love, so that he seemed like a seraph. He also received Extreme Unction, and in the mean while did nothing but constantly raise his eyes to heaven, and lovingly press to his heart an image of Mary. A Father asked him

to what purpose he kept a rosary in his hand, since he could not use it. He replied: 'It is a consolation to me; for it is something belonging to my Mother.' 'O, how much greater will your consolation be,' added the Father, 'when you shortly see her, and kiss her hands in heaven!' On hearing this, the Saint, with his countenance all on fire, raised his hands, to express his desire soon to be in her presence. His dear Mother then appeared to him, as he himself told those who surrounded him; and shortly afterwards, at the dawn of day, on the 15th of August, with his eyes fixed on heaven, he expired like a saint, without the slightest struggle; so much so, that it was only on presenting him the image of the Blessed Virgin, and seeing that he made no movement towards it, that it was perceived that he was already gone to kiss the feet of his beloved Queen in paradise.

PRAYER.

O, most sweet Lady and our Mother, thou hast already left the earth and reached thy kingdom, where, as Queen, thou art enthroned above all the choirs of angels, as the Church sings: 'She is exalted above the choirs of angels in the celestial kingdom.' But we know that thou in thy greatness hast never

forgotten us miserable creatures; and that by being exalted to such great glory, thou hast never lost compassion for us poor children of Adam; nay, even that it is increased in thee. From the high throne, then, to which thou art exalted, turn, O Mary, thy compassionate eyes upon us, and pity us. Remember also, that in leaving this world thou didst promise not to forget us. Look at us and succour us. See in the midst of what tempests and dangers we constantly are, and shall be until the end of our lives. Obtain us holy perseverance in the Divine friendship, that we may finally quit this life in God's grace; and thus we also shall one day come to kiss thy feet in paradise, and unite with the blessed Spirits in praising thee, and singing thy glories as thou deservest. Amen.

THE SECOND DAY.

OF MARY'S HOPE.

HOPE takes its rise in faith; for God enlightens us by faith to know His goodness and the promises He has made, that by this knowledge we may rise by hope to the desire of possessing Him. Mary then, having had the virtue of faith in its highest degree, had also hope in the same degree of excellence; and this made her say with David: 'But it is good for me to adhere to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God.' Mary was indeed that faithful spouse of the Holy Ghost of whom it was said: 'Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning on her beloved?' For she was always perfectly detached from earthly affections, looking upon the world as a desert, and therefore in no way relying either on creatures or on her own merits, but relying only on Divine grace, in which was all her confidence, she always advanced in the love of God.

The most holy Virgin gave a clear indication

of the greatness of her confidence in God in the first place, when she saw the anxiety of her holy spouse St. Joseph. Unable to account for her wonderful pregnancy, he was troubled at the thought of leaving her: 'But Joseph . . . minded to put her away privately.' It appeared then necessary that she should discover the hidden mystery to St. Joseph; but no, she would not herself manifest the grace she had received; she thought it better to abandon herself to Divine providence, in the full confidence that God Himself would defend her innocence and reputation. This is precisely what Cornelius à Lapide says, in his commentary on the words of the Gospel quoted above: 'The Blessed Virgin was unwilling to reveal this secret to Joseph, lest she might seem to boast of her gifts. She therefore resigned herself to the care of God, in the fullest confidence that He would guard her innocence and reputation.' She again showed her confidence in God when she knew that the time for the birth of our Lord approached, and was yet driven even from the lodgings of the poor in Bethlehem, and obliged to bring forth in a stable: 'And she laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for Him in the inn.' She did not then let drop a single word of complaint; but, abandoning herself to God, she trusted that He would

there assist her. The Divine Mother also showed how great was her confidence in Divine providence when she received notice from St. Joseph that they must fly into Egypt. On that very night she undertook so long a journey to a strange and unknown country, without provisions, without money, accompanied only by her Infant Jesus and her poor spouse: 'Who arose and took the Child and His Mother by night, and retired into Egypt.' But much more did she show her confidence when she asked her Son for wine at the marriage-feast of Cana; for when she had said, 'They have no wine,' Jesus answered her: 'Woman, what is it to thee and to Me? My hour is not yet come.' After this answer, which seemed an evident refusal, her confidence in the Divine goodness was such that she desired the servants to do whatever her Son told them; for the favour was certain to be granted: 'Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye.' It indeed was so: Jesus Christ ordered the vessels to be filled with water, and changed it into wine.

Let us, then, learn from Mary to have that confidence in God which we ought always to have, but principally in the great affair of our eternal salvation: an affair in which it is true that we must coöperate; yet it is from God alone that we must hope for the grace neces-

sary to obtain it. We must distrust our own strength, and say with the Apostle: 'I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me.'

EXAMPLE.

This example is not recorded in any book, but was told me by a priest, a friend of mine, as having happened to himself. This priest was hearing confessions in a church (to compromise no one I do not mention the name of the place, though the penitent gave him leave to publish the fact), when a young man stood before him, who seemed to wish, but at the same time to fear, to go to confession. The Father, after looking at him several times, at length called him, and asked him if he wished to confess. He replied that he did; but as his confession was likely to be very long, he begged to be taken to a private room. The penitent there began by saying that he was a foreigner, and of noble birth, but who had led such a life that he did not believe it possible that God would pardon him. Besides the other innumerable shameful crimes and murders he had committed, he said, that having entirely despaired of salvation, he committed sins no longer from inclination, but expressly to outrage God, out of the hatred he bore Him. He said, amongst other things, that

he wore a crucifix, and that he beat it out of disrespect, and that, that very morning, only a short time before, he had communicated sacrilegiously. And for what purpose? It was, that he might trample the sacred particle under his feet. And he had indeed already received it, and had only been prevented from executing his horrible design by the people who would have seen him. He then consigned the sacred particle in a piece of paper to the confessor. Having done this, he said, that, passing before the church, he had felt himself strongly impelled to enter it; that, unable to resist, he had done so. After entering, he was seized with great remorse of conscience, and at the same time a sort of confused and irresolute desire to confess his sins; and hence the reason for which he stood before the confessional; but while standing there, his confusion and diffidence were so great, that he endeavoured to go away; but it seemed to him as if some one held him there by force. 'In the mean time,' he said, 'Father, you called me; and now I am here making my confession, and I know not how.' The Father then asked him if he ever practised any devotion during the time, meaning towards the Blessed Virgin; for such conversions only come through the powerful hands of Mary. 'None, Father. Devotions, indeed!

I looked on myself as damned.' 'But reflect again,' said the Father. 'Father, I did nothing,' he repeated. But putting his hand to his breast to uncover it, he remembered that he wore the scapular of Mary's dolours. 'Ah, my son,' said the confessor, 'dost thou not see it is our Blessed Lady who has obtained thee so extraordinary a grace? And know,' he added, 'that to her this church is dedicated.' On hearing this the young man was moved, and began to grieve, and at the same time to weep; then, continuing the confession of his sins, his compunction increased to such a degree, that with a loud sob he fell fainting at the Father's feet. When he had been restored to consciousness, he finished his confession; and the Father with the greatest consolation absolved him, and sent him back to his own country entirely contrite, and resolved to change his life, having his full permission to preach and publish everywhere the great mercy that Mary had shown him.

PRAYER.

Immaculate and Blessed Virgin, since thou art the universal dispenser of all Divine graces, thou art the hope of all, and my hope. I will ever thank my Lord for having granted me the grace to know thee, and for having shown

me the means by which I may obtain graces and be saved. Thou art this means, O great Mother of God; for I now understand that it is principally through the merits of Jesus Christ, and then through thy intercession, that my soul must be saved. Pray then, O Mary, for me, and commend me to thy Son. Thou, far better than I do, knowest my miseries and my wants. What more can I say? Pity me; I am so miserable and ignorant, that I neither know, nor can I seek for, the graces that I stand the most in need of. My most sweet Queen and Mother, do thou seek and obtain for me from thy Son those graces which thou knowest to be the most expedient and necessary for my soul. I abandon myself entirely into thy hands, and only beg the Divine Majesty, that by the merits of my Saviour Jesus, He will grant me the graces which thou askest Him for me. Ask, ask then, O most holy Virgin, that which thou seest is best for me; thy prayers are never rejected; they are the prayers of a Mother addressed to a Son, who loves thee His Mother so much, and rejoices in doing all that thou desirest, that He may honour thee more, and at the same time show thee the great love He bears thee. Let us make an agreement, O Lady, that while I live confiding in thee, thou on thy part wilt charge thyself with my salvation. Amen.

THE THIRD DAY.

OF MARY'S CHARITY TOWARDS GOD.

St. Anselm says, that 'wherever there is the greatest purity, there is also the greatest charity.' The more a heart is pure and empty of itself, the greater is the fulness of its love towards God. The most holy Mary, because she was all humility, and had nothing of self in her, was filled with Divine love, so that 'her love towards God surpassed that of all men and angels,' as St. Bernardine writes. Therefore St. Francis of Sales with reason called her, 'the Queen of love.' God has, indeed, given men the precept to love Him with their whole hearts: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart.' But, as St. Thomas declares, 'this commandment will be fully and perfectly fulfilled by men in heaven alone, and not on earth, where it is only fulfilled imperfectly.' On this subject, blessed Albert the Great remarks, that in a certain sense, it would have been unbecoming had God given a precept, which was never to have been perfectly fulfilled. But this would have been the case had not the Divine Mother perfectly fulfilled

it. 'Divine love,' says St. Bernard, 'so penetrated and filled the soul of Mary, that no part of her was left untouched; so that she loved with her whole heart, with her whole soul, with her whole strength, and was full of grace.' Therefore Mary could well say: 'My Beloved has given Himself all to me, and I have given myself all to Him: "My Beloved to me, and I to Him."' 'Ah, well might even the Seraphim,' says Richard, 'have descended from heaven to learn, in the heart of Mary, how to love God.'

God, who is love, came on earth to enkindle in the hearts of all the flame of His Divine love; but in no heart did He enkindle it so much as in that of His Mother; for her heart was entirely pure from all earthly affections, and fully prepared to burn with this blessed flame. Thus St. Sophronius says, that 'Divine love so inflamed her, that nothing earthly could enter her affections; she was always burning with this heavenly flame, and, so to say, inebriated with it.' Hence the heart of Mary became all fire and flames, as we read of her in the sacred Canticles: 'The lamps thereof are fire and flames;' fire burning within through love, as St. Anselm explains it; and flames shining without, by the example she gave to all in the practice of virtues. St. Thomas of Villanova says, that the

bush seen by Moses, which burnt without being consumed, was a real symbol of Mary's heart. Therefore with reason, says St. Bernard, was she seen by St. John clothed with the sun: 'And there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun;' 'for,' continues the Saint, 'she was so closely united to God by love, and penetrated so deeply the abyss of Divine Wisdom, that, without a personal union with God, it would seem impossible for a creature to have a closer union with Him.'

Hence St. Bernardine of Sienna asserts that the most holy Virgin was never tempted by hell; for he says: 'As flies are driven away by a great fire, so were the evil spirits driven away by her ardent love, so much so, that they did not even dare approach her.'

Mary herself revealed to St. Bridget, that in this world she never had any thought, desire, or joy, but in and for God: 'I thought,' she said, 'of nothing but God, nothing pleased me but God;' so that her blessed soul being in the almost continual contemplation of God whilst on earth, the acts of love which she formed were innumerable, as Father Suarez writes. But a remark of Bernardine de Bustis pleases me still more: he says that Mary did not so much repeat acts of love as other Saints do, but that her whole life was one continued

act of it; for, by a special privilege, she always actually loved God. As a royal eagle, she always kept her eyes fixed on the Divine Sun of Justice; 'so that,' as St. Peter Damian says, 'the duties of active life did not prevent her from loving, and love did not prevent her from attending to those duties.' Therefore St. Germanus says, that the altar of propitiation, on which the fire was never extinguished day or night, was a type of Mary.

Neither was sleep an obstacle to Mary's love for God; since, as St. Augustine asserts, 'the dreams, when sleeping, of our first parents, in their state of innocence, were as happy as their lives when waking;' and if such a privilege were granted them, it certainly cannot be denied that it was also granted to the Divine Mother, as Suarez, the Abbot Rupert, and St. Ambrose fully admit. In fine, St. Bernardine asserts, that as long as Mary lived in this world she was continually loving God: 'The mind of the Blessed Virgin was always wrapped in the ardour of love.' The Saint moreover adds, 'that she never did anything which the Divine Wisdom did not show her to be pleasing to Him; and that she loved God as much as she thought He was to be loved by her.'

But since Mary loves God so much, there can be nothing which she so much requires of

her clients as, that they also should love Him to their utmost. This precisely she one day told blessed Angela of Foligno after communion, saying, 'Angela, be thou blessed by my Son, and endeavour to love Him as much as thou canst.' She also said to St. Bridget, 'Daughter, if thou desirest to bind me to thee, love my Son.' Mary desires nothing more than to see her Beloved, who is God, loved. Novarinus asks why the Blessed Virgin, with the Spouse in the Canticles, begged the angels to make the great love she bore Him known to our Lord, saying: 'I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my Beloved, that you tell Him I languish with love.' Did not God know how much she loved Him? 'Why did she seek to show the wound to her Beloved; since He it was who had inflicted it?' The same author answers, that the Divine Mother thereby wished to make her love known to us, not to God; that as she was herself wounded, so might she also be enabled to wound us with Divine love. And 'because Mary was all on fire with the love of God, all who love and approach her are inflamed by her with this same love; for she renders them like unto herself.' For this reason St. Catherine of Sienna called Mary 'the bearer of fire,' the bearer of the flame of Divine love. If we also desire to burn

with these blessed flames, let us endeavour always to draw nearer to our Mother by our prayers and the affections of our souls.

EXAMPLE.

A young nobleman who was on a sea voyage began to read an obscene book, in which he took much pleasure. A religious noticed it, and said to him: 'Are you disposed to make a present to our Blessed Lady?' The young man replied that he was. 'Well,' the other answered, 'I wish that for the love of the most holy Virgin you would give up that book, and throw it into the sea.' 'Here it is, Father,' said the young man. 'No,' replied the religious, 'you must yourself make Mary this present.' He did so, and no sooner had he returned to Genoa, his native place, than the Mother of God so inflamed his heart with Divine love that he entered a religious order.

PRAYER.

Ah, Mary, thou Queen of Love, of all creatures the most amiable, the most beloved, and the most loving, as St. Francis of Sales addressed thee,—my own sweet Mother, thou wast always and in all things inflamed with love towards God; deign then to bestow, at

least, a spark of it on me. Thou didst pray thy Son for the spouses whose wine had failed: 'They have no wine.' And wilt thou not pray for us, in whom the love of God, whom we are under such obligations to love, is wanting? Say also, 'They have no love,' and obtain us this love. This is the only grace for which we ask. O Mother, by the love thou bearest to Jesus, graciously hear and pray for us. Amen.

THE FOURTH DAY.

OF MARY'S CHARITY TOWARDS HER NEIGHBOUR.

Love towards God and love towards our neighbour are commanded by the same precept: 'And this commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God, love also his brother.' St. Thomas says that the reason for this is, that he who loves God loves all that God loves. St. Catharine of Genoa one day said, 'Lord, Thou willest that I should love my neighbour, and I can love none but Thee.' God answered her in these words: 'All who love Me love what I love.' But as there never was, and never will be, any one who loved God as much as Mary loved Him, so there never was, and never will be, any one who loved her neighbour as much as she did. Father Cornelius à Lapide, on these words of the Canticles, 'King Solomon hath made him a litter of the wood of Libanus, . . . the midst he covered with charity for the daughters of Jerusalem,' says, that 'this litter was Mary's womb, in which the Incarnate Word dwelt, filling it with charity for the daughters of Jerusalem; for Christ, who is love itself,

inspired the Blessed Virgin with charity in its highest degree, that she might succour all who had recourse to her.' So great was Mary's charity when on earth, that she succoured the needy without even being asked, as was the case at the marriage-feast of Cana, when she told her Son that family's distress, 'They have no wine,' and asked Him to work a miracle. O, with what speed did she fly when there was a question of relieving her neighbour! When she went to the house of Elizabeth to fulfil an office of charity, 'she went into the hill country with haste.' She could not, however, more fully display the greatness of her charity than she did in the offering which she made of her Son to death for our salvation. On this subject St. Bonaventure says, 'Mary so loved the world as to give her only-begotten Son.' Hence, St. Anselm exclaims: 'O blessed amongst women, thy purity surpasses that of the angels, and thy compassion that of the Saints!' 'Nor has this love of Mary for us,' says St. Bonaventure, 'diminished now that she is in heaven, but it has increased;' for 'now she better sees the miseries of men.' And therefore the Saint goes on to say: 'Great was the mercy of Mary towards the wretched when she was still in exile on earth; but far greater is it now that she reigns in heaven.' St.

Agnes assured St. Bridget, that 'there was no one who prayed without receiving graces through the charity of the Blessed Virgin.' Unfortunate indeed should we be, did not Mary intercede for us! Jesus Himself, addressing the same Saint, said, 'Were it not for the prayers of My Mother, there would be no hope of mercy.'

Blessed is he, says the Divine Mother, who listens to my instructions, pays attention to my charity, and in imitation of me, exercises it himself towards others. 'Blessed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates, and waiteth at the posts of my doors.' St. Gregory Nazianzen assures us that 'there is nothing by which we can with greater certainty gain the affection of Mary than by charity towards our neighbour.' Therefore as God exhorts us, saying, 'Be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful,' so also does Mary seem to say to all her children, 'Be ye merciful, as your Mother also is merciful.' It is certain that our charity towards our neighbour will be the measure of that which God and Mary will show us: 'Give, and it shall be given to you. For with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.' St. Methodius used to say, 'Give to the poor, and receive paradise.' For the Apostle writes, that

charity towards our neighbour renders us happy both in this world and in the next: 'But piety is profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' St. John Chrysostom, on the words of Proverbs, 'He that hath mercy on the poor lendeth to the Lord,' makes a remark to the same effect, saying: 'He who assists the needy, makes God his debtor.'

EXAMPLE.

We read, in the life of Sister Domenica del Paradiso, written by the Dominican Father Ignatius del Niente, that she was born of poor parents, in the village of Paradiso, near Florence. From her very infancy she began to serve the Divine Mother. She fasted every day in her honour, and on Saturdays gave her food, of which she deprived herself, to the poor. Every Saturday she went into the garden, and into the neighbouring fields, and gathered all the flowers that she could find, and presented them before an image of the Blessed Virgin, with the Child in her arms, which she kept in the house. But let us now see with how many favours this most gracious Lady recompensed the homage of her servant. One day, when Domenica was ten years of age, standing at the window, she saw in the street

a lady of noble mien, accompanied by a little child, and they both extended their hands, asking for alms. She went to get some bread, when in a moment, without the door being opened, she saw them by her side, and perceived that the child's hands and feet and side were wounded. She therefore asked the lady who had wounded the child. The mother answered, 'It was love.' Domenica, inflamed with love at the sight of the beauty and modesty of the child, asked him if the wounds pained him. His only answer was a smile. But as they were standing near the statue of Jesus and Mary, the lady said to Domenica, 'Tell me, my child, what is it that makes thee crown these images with flowers?' She replied: 'It is the love that I bear to Jesus and Mary.' 'And how much dost thou love them?' 'I love them as much as I can.' 'And how much canst thou love them?' 'As much as they enable me.' 'Continue, then,' added the lady—'continue to love them; for they will amply repay thy love in heaven.'

The little girl then, perceiving that a heavenly odour came forth from those wounds, asked the mother with what ointment she anointed them, and if it could be bought. The lady answered, 'It is bought with faith and good works.' Domenica then offered the bread. The mother said: 'Love is the food of my son;

tell him that thou lovest Jesus, and he will be satisfied.' The child at the word love seemed filled with joy, and turning towards the little girl, asked her how much she loved Jesus. She answered that she loved Him so much, that night and day she always thought of Him, and sought for nothing else but to give Him as much pleasure as she possibly could. 'It's well,' he replied; 'love Him, for love will teach thee what to do to please Him.' The sweet odour which exhaled from those wounds then increasing, Domenica cried out, 'O God, this odour makes me die of love! If the odour of a child is so sweet, what must that of heaven be!' But behold, the scene now changed; the Mother appeared clothed as a Queen, and the Child resplendent with beauty like the sun. He took the flowers and scattered them on the head of Domenica, who, recognising Jesus and Mary in those personages, was already prostrate adoring them. Thus the vision ended. Domenica afterwards took the habit of a Dominicaness, and died in the odour of sanctity, in the year 1553.

PRAYER.

O beloved Mother of God, most amiable Mary! O, that as thou didst consecrate thyself to the glory and love of God, with prompti-

tude and without reserve, I could offer thee, this day, the first years of my life, to devote myself without reserve to thy service, my holy and most sweet Lady! But it is now too late to do this; for, unfortunate creature that I am, I have lost so many years in the service of the world and my own caprices, and have lived in almost entire forgetfulness of thee and of God. But it is better to begin late than not at all. Behold, O Mary, I this day present myself to thee, and I offer myself without reserve to thy service for the long or short time that I still have to live in this world; and in union with thee I renounce all creatures, and devote myself entirely to the love of my Creator. I consecrate my mind to thee, O Queen, that it may always think of the love that thou deservest; my tongue to praise thee, my heart to love thee. Do thou accept, O most holy Virgin, the offering which this miserable sinner now makes thee. But since I enter thy service late, it is reasonable that I should redouble my acts of homage and love, thereby to compensate for lost time. Do thou help my weakness with thy powerful intercession, O Mother of Mercy, by obtaining me perseverance from thy Jesus, and strength to be always faithful to thee until death; that thus always serving thee in life, I may praise thee in paradise for all eternity. Amen.

THE FIFTH DAY.

OF THE HUMILITY OF MARY.

'HUMILITY,' says St. Bernard, 'is the foundation and guardian of virtues;' and with reason, for without it no other virtue can exist in a soul. Should she possess all virtues, all will depart when humility is gone. But, on the other hand, as St. Francis of Sales wrote to St. Jane de Chantal, 'God so loves humility, that wherever He sees it, He is immediately drawn thither.' This beautiful and so necessary virtue was unknown in the world; but the Son of God Himself came on earth to teach it by His own example, and willed that, in that virtue in particular, we should endeavour to imitate Him: 'Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart.' Mary, being the first and most perfect disciple of Jesus Christ in the practice of all virtues, was the first also in that of humility, and by it merited to be exalted above all creatures. It was revealed to St. Matilda that the first virtue in which the Blessed Mother particularly exercised herself, from her very childhood, was that of humility.

The first effect of humility of heart is a lowly opinion of ourselves. 'Mary had always so humble an opinion of herself, that, as it was revealed to the same St. Matilda, although she saw herself enriched with greater graces than all other creatures, she never preferred herself to any one.' The Abbot Rupert, explaining the passage of the sacred Canticles, 'Thou hast wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse, . . . with one hair of thy neck,' says, that the humble opinion which Mary had of herself was precisely that hair of the spouse's neck with which she wounded the heart of God. Not indeed that Mary considered herself a sinner; for humility is truth, as St. Teresa remarks; and Mary knew that she had never offended God. Neither was it that she did not acknowledge that she had received greater graces from God than all other creatures; for a humble heart always acknowledges the special favours of the Lord, to humble herself the more; but the Divine Mother, by the greater light wherewith she knew the infinite greatness and goodness of God, also knew her own nothingness, and therefore, more than all others, humbled herself. As a beggar, when clothed with a rich garment which has been bestowed upon her, does not pride herself on it in the presence of the giver, but is rather humbled, being reminded thereby of her own poverty, so also

the more Mary saw herself enriched, the more did she humble herself, remembering that all was God's gift. Therefore St. Bernardine says, that 'after the Son of God, no creature in the world was so exalted as Mary, because no creature in the world ever humbled itself so much as she did.'

Moreover, it is an act of humility to conceal heavenly gifts. Mary wished to conceal from St. Joseph the great favour whereby she had become the Mother of God, although it seemed necessary to make it known to him, if only to remove from the mind of her poor spouse any suspicions as to her virtue, which he might have entertained on seeing her pregnant, or, at least, the perplexity in which it indeed threw him; for St. Joseph, on the one hand unwilling to doubt Mary's chastity, and on the other ignorant of the mystery, 'was minded to put her away privately.' This he would have done, had not the angel revealed to him that his spouse was pregnant by the operation of the Holy Ghost. Again, a soul which is truly humble refuses her own praise; and should praises be bestowed on her, she refers them all to God. Behold, Mary is disturbed at hearing herself praised by St. Gabriel; and when St. Elizabeth said, 'Blessed art thou among women, . . . and whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me? . . .

Blessed art thou that hast believed,' &c., Mary referred all to God, and answered in that humble Canticle, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord,' as if she had said, 'Thou dost praise me, Elizabeth, but I praise the Lord, to whom alone honour is due. Thou wonderest that I should come to thee, and I wonder at the Divine goodness, in which alone my spirit exults: "And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Thou praisest me, because I have believed; I praise my God because He hath been pleased to exalt my nothingness: "Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid."'

It is also a part of humility to serve others. Mary did not refuse to go and serve Elizabeth for three months. Hence St. Bernard says: 'Elizabeth wondered that Mary should have come to visit her; but that which is still more admirable is, that she came not to be ministered to, but to minister.' Those who are humble are retiring, and choose the last places; and therefore Mary, remarks St. Bernard, when her Son was preaching in a house, as it is related by St. Matthew, wishing to speak to Him, would not of her own accord enter, but 'remained outside, and did not avail herself of her maternal authority to interrupt Him.' For the same reason also, when she was with the Apostles awaiting the coming of the Holy Ghost, she took the lowest place, as St. Luke

relates: 'All these were persevering with one mind in prayer, with the women and Mary the Mother of Jesus.' Not that St. Luke was ignorant of the Divine Mother's merits, on account of which he should have named her in the first place, but because she had taken the last place amongst the Apostles and women; and therefore he described them all, as an author remarks, in the order in which they were. Hence St. Bernard says: 'Justly has the last become the first, who being the first of all became the last.' In fine, those who are humble love to be contemned; therefore we do not read that Mary showed herself in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, when her Son was received by the people with so much honour; but on the other hand, at the death of her Son, she did not shrink from appearing on Calvary, through fear of the dishonour which would accrue to her when it was known that she was the Mother of Him who was condemned to die an infamous death as a criminal.

The venerable Sister Paula of Foligno was given to understand, in an ecstasy, how great was the humility of our Blessed Lady; and giving an account of it to her confessor, she was so filled with astonishment at its greatness, that she could only exclaim, 'O, the humility of the Blessed Virgin! O, Father, the umility of the Blessed Virgin, how great was

the humility of the Blessed Virgin! In the world there is no such thing as humility, not even in its lowest degree, when you see the humility of Mary.' On another occasion our Lord showed St. Bridget two ladies. The one was all pomp and vanity. 'She,' He said, 'is Pride; but the other one whom thou seest with her head bent down, courteous towards all, having God alone in her mind, and considering herself as no one, is Humility: her name is Mary.' Hereby God was pleased to make known to us that the humility of His Blessed Mother was such that she was humility itself.

There can be no doubt, as St. Gregory of Nyssa remarks, that of all virtues there is perhaps none the practice of which is more difficult to our nature, corrupted as it is by sin, than that of humility. But there is no escape; we can never be true children of Mary if we are not humble. 'If,' says St. Bernard, 'thou canst not imitate the virginity of this humble Virgin, imitate her humility.' She detests the proud, and only invites the humble to come to her: 'Whosoever is a little one, let him come to me.'

EXAMPLE.

In one of our missions, after the sermon on Mary, which it is always customary in our

congregation to preach, a very old man came to make his confession to one of the Fathers. Filled with consolation, he said: 'Father, our Blessed Lady has granted me a grace.' 'What grace has she granted you?' the confessor asked. 'You must know, Father,' he replied, 'that for five-and-thirty years I have made sacrilegious confessions; for there is a sin which I was ashamed to confess; and yet I have passed through many dangers, have many times been at the point of death; and had I then died, I should certainly have been lost; but now our Blessed Lady has touched my heart with grace to tell it.' This he said weeping, and shedding so many tears, that he quite excited compassion. The Father, after hearing his confession, asked him what devotion he had practised. He replied, that on Saturdays he had never failed to abstain from milk diet, in honour of Mary, and that, on this account, the Blessed Virgin had shown him mercy. At the same time, he gave the Father leave to publish the fact.

PRAYER.

O, immaculate and holy Virgin! O, Creature the most humble and the most exalted before God! thou wast so lowly in thine own eyes, but so great in the eyes of thy Lord,

that He exalted thee to such a degree as to choose thee for His Mother, and then made thee Queen of heaven and earth. I therefore thank God, who so greatly has exalted thee, and rejoice in seeing thee so closely united with Him, that more cannot be granted to a pure creature. Before thee, who art so humble, though endowed with such precious gifts, I am ashamed to appear—I who am so proud in the midst of so many sins. But, miserable as I am, I will also salute thee, 'Hail, Mary, full of grace!' Thou art already full of grace; impart a portion of it to me. 'Our Lord is with thee;' that Lord who was always with thee from the first moment of thy creation has now united Himself more closely to thee by becoming thy Son. 'Blessed art thou amongst women.' O Lady, blessed amongst all women, obtain the Divine blessing for us also. 'And blessed is the fruit of thy womb.' O blessed plant, which hath given to the world so noble and holy a Fruit! 'Holy Mary, Mother of God!' O Mary, I acknowledge that thou art the true Mother of God; and in defence of this truth I am ready to give my life a thousand times. 'Pray for us sinners.' But if thou art the Mother of God, thou art also the Mother of our salvation, and of us poor sinners; since God became man to save sinners, and made thee His Mother that thy

prayers might have power to save any sinner. Hasten then, O Mary, and pray for us, 'now, and at the hour of our death.' Pray always; pray now that we live in the midst of so many temptations and dangers of losing God; but still more, pray for us at the hour of our death, when we are on the point of leaving this world, and being presented before God's tribunal; that being saved by the merits of Jesus Christ, and by thy intercession, we may come one day, without farther danger of being lost, to salute thee and praise thee with thy Son in heaven for all eternity. Amen.

THE SIXTH DAY.

OF MARY'S CHASTITY.

SINCE the fall of Adam, the senses being rebellious to reason, chastity is of all virtues the one which is the most difficult to practise. May God be ever praised, however, who in Mary has given us a great example of this virtue. 'With reason,' says Richard of St. Lawrence, 'is Mary called the Virgin of virgins; for she, without the counsel or example of others, was the first who offered her virginity to God.' Thus did she bring all virgins who imitate her to God, as David had already foretold: 'After her shall virgins be brought . . . into the temple of the King.' Without counsel, and without example. Yes; for St. Bernard says: 'O Virgin, who taught thee to please God by virginity, and to lead an angel's life on earth?' 'Ah,' replies St. Sophronius, 'God chose this most pure Virgin for His Mother, that she might be an example of chastity to all.' Therefore does St. Ambrose call Mary 'the standard-bearer of virginity.'

By reason of her purity, the Blessed Virgin was also declared by the Holy Ghost to be

beautiful as the turtle-dove: 'Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtle-dove's.' 'Mary,' says Aponius, 'was a most pure turtle-dove.' For the same reason she was also called a lily: 'As the lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters.' On this passage Denis the Carthusian remarks, that Mary was compared to a lily amongst thorns because all other virgins were thorns, either to themselves or to others; but that the Blessed Virgin was so neither to herself nor to others; for she inspired all who looked at her with chaste thoughts. This is confirmed by St. Thomas, who says that the beauty of the Blessed Virgin was an incentive to chastity in all who beheld her. St. Jerome declared that it was his opinion that St. Joseph remained a virgin by living with Mary; for, writing against the heretic Helvidius, who denied Mary's virginity, he says: 'Thou sayest that Mary did not remain a Virgin. I say, that not only she remained a Virgin, but even that Joseph preserved his virginity through Mary.' An author says, that so much did the Blessed Virgin love this virtue, that to preserve it she would have been willing to have renounced even the dignity of Mother of God. This we may conclude from her answer to the archangel: 'How shall this be done, because I know not man?' And from the words she

afterwards added: 'Be it done to me according to thy word'—signifying that she gave her consent on the condition that, as the angel had assured her, she should become a Mother only by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost.

St. Ambrose says, that 'whoever has preserved chastity is an angel, and that he who has lost it is a devil.' Our Lord assures us that those who are chaste become angels: 'They shall be as the angels of God in heaven.' But the impure become as devils, hateful in the sight of God. St. Remigius used to say that the greater part of adults are lost by this vice. Seldom, as we have already said with St. Augustine, is a victory gained over this vice. But why? It is because the means by which it may be gained are seldom made use of. These means are three, according to Bellarmine and the masters of a spiritual life: fasting, the avoidance of dangerous occasions, and prayer. By fasting is to be understood especially mortification of the eyes and of the appetite. Although our Blessed Lady was full of Divine grace, yet was she so mortified in her eyes, that, according to St. Epiphanius and St. John Damascen, she always kept them cast down, and never fixed them on any one; and they say that from her very childhood her modesty was such, that it filled every one who saw her with astonishment. Hence St. Luke

remarks, that, in going to visit St. Elizabeth, 'she went with haste,' that she might be less seen in public. Philibert relates, that as to her food, it was revealed to a hermit named Felix, that when a baby she only took milk once a day. St. Gregory of Tours affirms, that throughout her life she fasted; and St. Bonaventure adds, 'that Mary would never have found so much grace had she not been most moderate in her food; for grace and gluttony cannot subsist together.' In fine, Mary was mortified in all; so that of her it was said, 'My hands dropped with myrrh.'

The second means is to fly the occasion of sin: 'He that is aware of the snares shall be secure.' Hence St. Philip Neri says, that 'in the war of the senses cowards conquer;' that is to say, those who fly from dangerous occasions. Mary fled as much as possible from the sight of men; and therefore St. Luke remarks, that in going to visit St. Elizabeth 'she went with haste into the hill country.'

The third means is prayer. 'And as I knew,' said the wise man, 'that I could not otherwise be continent except God gave it, . . I went to the Lord and besought Him.' The Blessed Virgin revealed to St. Elizabeth of Hungary that she acquired no virtue without effort and continual prayer. St. John Damascen says, that Mary 'is pure and a lover of

purity.' Hence she cannot endure those who are unchaste. But whoever has recourse to her will certainly be delivered from this vice, if he only pronounces her name with confidence. The venerable John d'Avila used to say, 'that many have conquered impure temptions by devotion to her Immaculate Conception.'

EXAMPLE.

Whilst Angela, the daughter of a king of Bohemia, was in a convent, Mary appeared to her, and an angel said: Arise, Angela, and fly to Jerusalem; for thy father wishes to give thee in marriage to the Prince of Hungary. The devout virgin immediately departed; and on her journey the Divine Mother again appeared to her, and encouraged her to continue. She was then received in Jerusalem amongst the Carmelites; and was afterwards desired by the Blessed Virgin herself to return to her own country, where she lived a holy life until her death.

St. Gregory relates that there was a young woman named Musa, who was very devout to the Mother of God, to whom, when she was in great danger of losing her innocence by the bad example of her companions, Mary appeared one day, with many Saints, and said: 'Musa, dost thou also wish to be one of these?'

On her answering 'Yes,' she added: 'Well, withdraw from thy companions, and prepare thyself; for in a month thou shalt come.' Musa did so, and related the vision. On the thirteenth day she was at the point of death, when the most Blessed Virgin again appeared, and invited her to come. She replied, 'Behold I come, O Lady,' and sweetly expired.

PRAYER.

Ah, my Immaculate Lady, I rejoice with thee on seeing thee enriched with so great purity. I thank, and resolve always to thank, our common Creator for having preserved thee from every stain of sin. I would that the whole world knew thee and acknowledged thee as being that beautiful 'Dawn' which was always illumined with Divine light; as that chosen 'Ark' of salvation, free from the common shipwreck of sin; as that 'perfect and immaculate Dove' which thy Divine Spouse declared thee to be; as that 'enclosed Garden' which was the delight of God; as that 'sealed Fountain' whose waters were never troubled by an enemy; and, finally, as that 'white Lily' which thou art, and who, though born in the midst of the thorns of the children of Adam, all of whom are conceived in sin, and the enemies of God, wast alone con-

ceived pure and spotless, and in all things the beloved of thy Creator.

Permit me, then, to praise thee also as thy God Himself has praised thee: 'Thou art all fair, and there is not a spot in thee.' O, most pure Dove, all fair, all beautiful, always the friend of God! 'O, how beautiful art thou, my beloved! how beautiful art thou!' Ah, most sweet, most amiable, immaculate Mary, thou who art so beautiful in the eyes of thy Lord—ah, disdain not to cast thy compassionate eyes on the wounds of my soul, loathsome as they are! Behold me, pity me, heal me. O, beautiful loadstone of hearts, draw also my miserable heart to thyself! O thou, who from the first moment of thy life didst appear pure and beautiful before God, pity me, who not only was born in sin, but have again since baptism stained my soul with crimes! What grace will God ever refuse thee, who chose thee for His Daughter, His Mother, and Spouse, and therefore preserved thee from every stain, and in His love preferred thee to all other creatures? I will say in the words of St. Philip Neri: 'Immaculate Virgin, thou hast to save me.' Grant that I may always remember thee; and thou, do thou never forget me. The happy day, when I shall go to behold thy beauty in paradise, seems a thousand years off, so much do I long to praise and

love thee more than I can now do, my Mother, my Queen, my beloved, most beautiful, most sweet, most pure, Immaculate Mary. Amen.

THE SEVENTH DAY.

OF MARY'S OBEDIENCE.

When the angel Gabriel announced to Mary God's great designs upon her, she, through love for obedience, would only call herself a handmaid: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord.' 'Yes,' says St. Thomas of Villanova, 'for this faithful handmaid never, in either thought, or word, or deed, contradicted the Most High; but, entirely despoiled of her own will, she lived always, and in all things, obedient to that of God.' She herself declared, that God was pleased with her obedience, when she said, 'He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid;' for in prompt obedience it is that the humility of a servant, properly speaking, consists. St. Augustine says that, by her obedience, the Divine Mother repaired the evil done by Eve's disobedience. Mary's obedience was much more perfect than that of all other Saints; since all men, on account of original sin, are prone to evil, and find it difficult to do good; but not so the Blessed Virgin. St. Bernardine writes that, 'because Mary was free from

original sin, she found no obstacle in obeying God; she was like a wheel, which was easily turned by every inspiration of the Holy Ghost.' 'Hence,' continues the same Saint, 'her only object in this world was to keep her eyes constantly fixed on God, to discover His will, and when she had found out what He required, to perform it.' Of her was said, 'My soul melted when He spoke;' that is, as Richard explains it, 'My soul is as metal, liquefied by the fire of love, ready to be moulded into any form, according to the Divine will.'

Mary well proved how ready she was to obey in all things; in the first place when, to please God, she obeyed even the Roman emperor, and undertook the long journey of at least seventy miles to Bethlehem, in the winter, when she was pregnant, and in such poverty, that she had to give birth to her Son in a stable. She showed equal obedience in undertaking, on the very same night on which she had notice of it from St. Joseph, the longer and more difficult journey into Egypt. Here Silveira asks, why the command to fly into Egypt was given, rather to St. Joseph, than to the Blessed Virgin, who was to suffer the most from it; and he answers, that it was 'that Mary might not be deprived of an occasion in which to perform

an act of obedience, for which she was always most ready.' But, above all, she showed her heroic obedience when, to obey the Divine will, she offered her Son to death, and this with such constancy, as St. Ildephonsus says, that had executioners been wanting, she would have been ready herself to have crucified Him. Hence Venerable Bede, explaining our Lord's answer to the woman spoken of in the Gospel, who exclaimed, 'Blessed is the womb that bore Thee! . . . Yea, rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it,' says that Mary was indeed blessed in becoming the Mother of God, but that she was much more so in always loving and obeying the Divine will.

Our Lord, once speaking to St. Bridget, on the security which is found in obeying a spiritual director, said: 'Obedience brings all Saints to glory;' for, as St. Philip Neri used to say, 'God demands no account of things done by obedience, having Himself said, "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me." The Mother of God herself revealed to St. Bridget, that through the merit of her obedience, she had obtained so great power, that no sinner, however great were his crimes, who had recourse to her with a purpose of amendment, failed to obtain pardon.'

EXAMPLE.

The Disciple relates that there was a poor sinner, who, amongst other crimes which he had committed, had killed his father and a brother, and therefore was a fugitive. One day in Lent, hearing a sermon on the Divine mercy, he went to confess his sins to the preacher himself. The confessor, on hearing the enormous crimes which he had committed, sent him to an altar of our Lady of Sorrows, that she might obtain him contrition, and the pardon of his sins. The sinner obeyed, and began to pray; when, behold! he suddenly dropped down dead from excess of grief. On the following day, when the priest recommended the deceased to the prayers of the people, a white dove appeared in the church, and let a card drop at his feet. The priest took it up, and found the following words written upon it: 'The soul of the deceased, on leaving his body, went straight to heaven: continue thou to preach the infinite mercy of God.'

PRAYER OF ST. ANSELM.

We beseech thee, O most holy Lady, by the favour that God did thee, in raising thee so high as to make all things possible to thee with Him, so to act, that the plenitude of

grace, which thou didst merit, may render us partakers of thy glory. Strive, O most merciful Lady, to obtain us that for which God was pleased to become man in thy chaste womb. O lend us a willing ear. If thou deignest to pray to thy Son for this, He will immediately grant it. It suffices that thou willest our salvation, and then we are sure to obtain it. But who can restrain thy great mercy? If thou, who art our Mother, and the Mother of Mercy, dost not pity us, what will become of us when thy Son comes to judge us?

Help us then, O most compassionate Lady, and consider not the multitude of our sins. Remember always that our Creator took human flesh of thee, not to condemn sinners, but to save them. If thou hadst become Mother of God only for thine own advantage, we might say that it signified little to thee whether we were lost or saved; but God clothed Himself with thy flesh for thy salvation, and for that of all men. What would thy great power and glory avail us, if thou dost not make us partakers of thy happiness? O help us then and protect us: thou knowest how greatly we stand in need of thy assistance. We recommend ourselves to thee; O, let us not lose our souls, but make us eternally serve and love thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

THE EIGHTH DAY.

OF MARY'S POVERTY.

OUR most loving Redeemer, that we might learn from Him to despise the things of the world, was pleased to be poor on earth: 'Being rich,' says St. Paul, 'He became poor for your sake, that through His poverty you might be rich.' Therefore does Jesus Christ exhort each one who desires to be His disciple: 'If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, . . . and come follow Me.' Behold Mary, His most perfect disciple, who indeed imitated His example. Father Canisius proves that Mary could have lived in comfort, on the property she inherited from her parents, but she preferred to remain poor, and reserving only a small portion for herself, distributed the rest in alms to the temple, and the poor. Many authors are of opinion that Mary even made a vow of poverty; and we know that she herself said to St. Bridget, 'From the beginning I vowed in my own heart that I would never possess anything on earth.' The gifts received from the holy Magi cannot certainly have been of small value, but we are assured by St. Bernard that she distributed them to the poor through the hands

of St. Joseph. That the Divine Mother immediately disposed of these gifts is also evident from the fact that at her purification in the temple she did not offer a lamb, which was the offering prescribed in Leviticus for those who could afford it: 'For a son she shall bring a lamb;' but she offered two turtle-doves, or two pigeons, which was the oblation prescribed for the poor: 'And to offer a sacrifice, according as it is written in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons.' Mary herself said to St. Bridget, 'All that I could get I gave to the poor, and only reserved a little food and clothing for myself.'

Out of love for poverty she did not disdain to marry St. Joseph, who was only a poor carpenter, and afterwards to maintain herself by the work of her hands, by spinning or sewing, as we are assured by St. Bonaventure. The angel, speaking of Mary, told St. Bridget, 'that worldly riches were of no more value in her eyes than dirt.' In a word, she always lived poor, and she died poor; for at her death we do not know that she left anything but two poor gowns to two women who had served her during her life, as it is recorded by Metaphrastes and Nicephorus.

St. Philp Neri used to say that 'He who loves the things of the world will never be-

come a Saint.' We may add what St. Teresa said on the same subject, that 'it justly follows that he who runs after perishable things should also himself be lost.' But, on the other hand, she adds, that the virtue of poverty is a treasure, which comprises in itself all other treasures. She says the 'virtue of poverty;' for, as St. Bernard remarks, this virtue does not consist in only being poor, but in loving poverty. Therefore did Jesus Christ say, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' They are blessed because they desire nothing but God, and in God they find every good; in poverty they find their paradise on earth, as St. Francis did when he exclaimed: 'My God and my all.' Let us then, as St. Augustine exhorts us, 'love that one good in which all good things are found;' and address our Lord in the words of St. Ignatius: 'Give me only Thy love, with Thy grace, and I am rich enough.' 'When we have to suffer from poverty let us console ourselves,' says St. Bonaventure, 'with the thought that Jesus and His Mother were also poor like ourselves.'

EXAMPLE.

The parish priest of a country place was assisting a certain rich man, who was dying, in a magnificent house, and attended upon by

servants, relatives, and friends; but the good priest saw also devils in the shape of dogs, who were waiting to carry off his soul, as they in fact did; for he died in sin. In the mean time, a poor woman was also ill, and, desiring to receive the Holy Sacraments, sent for the parish priest; but he, being unable to leave the rich man, whose soul stood in such need of assistance, sent her another priest, who immediately went, carrying the pix which contained the most Blessed Sacrament. On his arrival he saw neither servants nor attendants, nor fine furniture; for the sick woman was poor, and perhaps only lying on a little straw. But he saw a great light in the room; and near the bed of the dying person was the Mother of God, Mary, consoling her, and, with a cloth in her hand, wiping off the sweat of death. The priest, seeing Mary, feared to enter; but the Blessed Virgin made him a sign to come in. The priest entered, and Mary showed him a stool, that he might be seated, and hear the confession of her servant. This he did; and after she had communicated, with great devotion, she happily breathed forth her soul in the arms of Mary.

PRAYER.

O, my most sweet Mother, how shall I die, poor sinner that I am? Even now the thought

THE NINTH DAY.

OF MARY'S PATIENCE.

THIS world being a place of merit, it is rightly called a valley of tears; for we are all placed in it to suffer, that we may, by patience, gain our own souls unto life eternal, as our Lord Himself says: 'In your patience you shall possess your souls.' God gave us the Blessed Virgin Mary as a model of all virtues, but more especially as an example of patience. St. Francis of Sales, amongst other things, remarks, that it was precisely for this reason that at the marriage feast of Cana, Jesus Christ gave the Blessed Virgin an answer, by which He seemed to value her prayers but little: 'Woman, what is that to thee and to Me?' And He did this, that He might give us the example of the patience of His most holy Mother. But what need have we to seek for instances of this virtue? Mary's whole life was a continual exercise of her patience; for, as the angel revealed to St. Bridget, 'as a rose grows up amongst thorns, so did this Blessed Virgin grow up amongst tribulations.' Compassion alone for the Re-

deemer's sufferings sufficed to make her a martyr of patience. Hence St. Bonaventure says, that 'a crucified Mother conceived a crucified Son.' How much did she not suffer, both in her journey to and during her residence in Egypt, as also during the time she lived with her Son in the house at Nazareth! What Mary endured when present at the death of Jesus on Calvary, is alone sufficient to show us how constant and sublime was her patience: 'There stood by the cross of Jesus His Mother.'

Therefore St. Ildephonsus did not hesitate to assert that, 'To say that Mary's sorrows were greater than all the torments of the martyrs united, was to say too little.' And St. Anselm adds, that 'the most cruel tortures inflicted on the holy martyrs were trifling or as nothing, in comparison with the martyrdom of Mary.' St. Basil of Seleucia also writes, 'that as the sun exceeds all the other planets in splendour, so did Mary's sufferings exceed those of all the other martyrs.' A learned author concludes with a beautiful sentiment: he says, that so great was the sorrow of this tender Mother in the Passion of Jesus that she alone compassionated in a degree by any means adequate to its merits the death of a God made man.

If we then wish to be the children of Mary, we must endeavour to imitate her in her patience: 'For what,' says St. Cyprian, 'can en-

rich us with greater merit in this life, and greater glory in the next, than the patient endurance of sufferings?' God said, by the Prophet Osee, 'I will hedge up thy way with thorns.' To this St. Gregory adds, that 'the way of the elect is hedged with thorns.' As a hedge of thorns protects a vineyard, so does God protect His servants from the danger of attaching themselves to the earth, by encompassing them with tribulations. Therefore St. Cyprian concludes, that it is patience which delivers us from sin and from hell. It is also patience which makes Saints: 'Patience hath a perfect work,' bearing in peace, not only the crosses which come immediately from God, such as sickness, poverty, &c., but also those which come from men, persecutions, injuries, and the rest. St. John saw all the Saints bearing palm branches, the emblem of martyrdom, in their hands: 'After this I saw a great multitude, and palms were in their hands;' thereby denoting, that all adults who are saved must be martyrs, either by shedding their blood for Christ, or by patience. Rejoice, then, exclaims St. Gregory: 'We can be martyrs without the executioner's sword, if we only preserve patience.' 'Provided only,' as St. Bernard says, 'we endure the afflictions of this life with patience and joy, O what fruit will not every pain borne for God's sake produce for us in

heaven!' Hence the Apostle encourages us, saying, 'That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.' St. Teresa's instructions on this subject are beautiful. She used to say, 'Those who embrace the cross, do not feel it;' and again, 'that if we resolve to suffer, the pain ceases.' When our crosses weigh heavily upon us, let us have recourse to Mary, who is called by the Church, 'the Comfortress of the afflicted;' and by St. John Damascen, 'the Remedy for all sorrows of the heart.'

EXAMPLE.

In the revelations of St. Bridget we read that there was a rich man, as noble by birth as he was vile and sinful in his habits. He had given himself, by an express compact, as a slave to the devil; and for sixty successive years had served him, leading such a life as may be imagined, and never approaching the sacraments. Now this Prince was dying; and Jesus Christ, to show him mercy, commanded St. Bridget to tell her confessor to go and visit him, and exhort him to confess his sins. The confessor went, and the sick man said that he did not require confession, as he had often approached the sacrament of penance. The priest went a se-

cond time; but this poor slave of hell persevered in his obstinate determination not to confess. Jesus again told the Saint to desire the confessor to return. He did so; and on this third occasion told the sick man the revelation made to the Saint, and that he had returned so many times because our Lord, who wished to show him mercy, had so ordered. On hearing this the dying man was touched, and began to weep: 'But how,' he exclaimed, 'can I be saved; I, who for sixty years have served the devil as his slave, and have my soul burdened with innumerable sins?' 'My son,' answered the Father, encouraging him, 'doubt not; if you repent of them, on the part of God I promise you pardon.' Then, gaining confidence, he said to the confessor: 'Father, I looked upon myself as lost, and already despaired of salvation; but now I feel a sorrow for my sins, which gives me confidence; and since God has not yet abandoned me I will make my confession.' In fact, he made his confession four times on that day, with the greatest marks of sorrow, and on the following morning received the holy communion. On the sixth day, contrite and resigned, he died. After his death Jesus Christ again spoke to St. Bridget, and told her that that sinner was saved; that he was then in purgatory, and that he owed his salvation to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin His Mother;

for the deceased, although he had led so wicked a life, had nevertheless always preserved devotion to her dolours, and whenever he thought of them pitied her.

PRAYER.

O my afflicted Mother! Queen of martyrs and of sorrows, thou didst so bitterly weep over thy Son, who died for my salvation; but what will thy tears avail me if I am lost? By the merit, then, of thy sorrows, obtain me true contrition for my sins, and a real amendment of life, together with constant and tender compassion for the sufferings of Jesus, and thy dolours. And if Jesus and thou, being so innocent, have suffered so much for love of me, obtain that at least I, who am deserving of hell, may suffer something for your love. 'O Lady,' will I say with St. Bonaventure, 'if I have offended thee, in justice wound my heart: if I have served thee, I now ask wounds for my reward. It is shameful to me to see my Lord Jesus wounded, and thee wounded with Him, and myself without a wound.' In fine, O my Mother, by the grief thou didst experience in seeing thy Son bow down His head and expire on the cross in the midst of so many torments, I beseech thee to obtain me a good death. Ah, cease not, O advocate of sinners, to assist my afflicted soul in the midst of the combats in which it will hav

to engage on its great passage from time to eternity. And as it is probable that I may then have lost my speech, and strength to invoke thy name and that of Jesus, who are all my hope, I do so now; I invoke thy Son and thee to succour me in that last moment, and I say: Jesus and Mary, to you I commend my soul. Amen.

THE TENTH DAY.

OF MARY'S PRAYER.

THERE never was a soul on earth who practised, in so perfect a manner as the Blessed Virgin, the great lesson taught by our Saviour, 'that we ought always to pray, and not to faint.' From no one, says St. Bonaventure, can we better take example, and learn how necessary is perseverance in prayer, than from Mary: 'Mary gave an example which we must follow, and not faint;' for blessed Albert the Great asserts, 'that after Jesus Christ, the Divine Mother was the most perfect in prayer of all who ever have been, or ever will be.' In the first place, because her prayer was continual and persevering. In the very first moment in which she had the perfect use of reason, which was, as we have said in the discourse on her nativity, in the first moment of her existence, she began to pray. That she might be able to devote herself still more to prayer, when only three years of age she shut herself up in the retirement of the temple, where, amongst other hours set aside for this exercise, as she herself told St. Elizabeth of Hungary, 'she always rose at midnight, and

went before the altar of the temple to offer her supplications.' For the same purpose, and that she might constantly meditate on the sufferings of Jesus, Odilo says, 'She very frequently visited the places of our Lord's nativity, passion, and sepulture.' Moreover, she prayed with the greatest recollection of spirit, free from every distraction and inordinate affection, nor did any exterior occupation ever obscure the light of her unceasing contemplation.

Through love for prayer, the Blessed Virgin was so enamoured of solitude, that, as she told St. Bridget, when she lived in the temple, she avoided even intercourse with her parents. On the words of the Prophet Isaias, 'Behold a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and His name shall be called Emanuel,' St. Jerome remarks, that the word *virgin*, in Hebrew, properly signifies *a retired virgin;* so that even the Prophet foretold the affection which Mary would have for solitude. Richard of St. Lawrence says that the angel addressed her in these words: 'The Lord is with thee,' on account of her great love for retirement. For this reason St. Vincent Ferrer asserts, that the Divine Mother 'only left her house to go to the temple, and then her demeanour was all composed, and she kept her eyes modestly cast down.' For the same reason, when she went to visit St. Elizabeth, 'she went with haste.' From this St. Ambrose says, 'that

Virgins should learn to avoid the world.' St. Bernard affirms, that on account of Mary's love for prayer and solitude, 'she was always careful to avoid the society and converse of men.' She was therefore called a turtle-dove by the Holy Ghost: 'Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtle-dove's.' 'The turtle-dove,' says Vergello, 'is a solitary bird, and denotes unitive affection in the soul.' Hence it was that the Blessed Virgin always lived solitary in this world, as in a desert, and that of her it was said, 'Who is she that goeth up by the desert, as a pillar of smoke?' On these words, the Abbot Rupert says, 'Thus didst thou, indeed loving solitude, ascend by the desert.'

Philo assures us, that 'God only speaks to souls in solitude.' God Himself declares the same thing by the Prophet Osee: 'I will lead her into the wilderness: and I will speak to her heart.' 'O happy solitude!' exclaims St. Jerome, 'in which God speaks familiarly, and converses with His own.' 'Yes,' says St. Bernard, for 'solitude, and the silence which is there enjoyed, force the soul to leave the earth in thought, and meditate on the things of heaven.'

EXAMPLE.

Three devout Virgins, by the advice of their confessor, one year recited, for forty days, the

entire rosary as a preparation for the Feast of the Purification of Mary. On the vigil, the Divine Mother appeared to the first of the three sisters, with a rich robe embroidered with gold, and thanking her, blessed her. She then appeared to the second, with a simple robe, and also thanked her, but she said, 'Lady, why didst thou go to my sister with so much richer a robe?' 'Because,' Mary replied, 'she clothed me with a richer one than thou didst.' She afterwards appeared to the third, with a robe of common sacking; on seeing which, the sister asked her pardon for the tepidity with which she honoured her. The following year all prepared themselves well for the same festival, reciting the rosary with great devotion. On the night preceding the feast, Mary appeared to them, resplendent with glory, and said, 'Prepare yourselves: for to-morrow you will go with me to Paradise;' and in fact they told their confessor what had happened, received the holy communion in the church, and towards the hour of Complin, they again saw the most Blessed Virgin, who came to take them, and amid the songs of angels, one after the other sweetly expired.

PRAYER OF WILLIAM OF PARIS.

O Mother of God, I have recourse to thee, and I call upon thee not to reject me; for the whole congregation of the faithful, calls and proclaims

thee the Mother of Mercy. Thou art that one who, from being so dear to God, art always graciously heard; thy clemency was never wanting to any one; thy most benign affability never despised any sinner who had recourse to thee, however enormous his crimes. Can it be falsely, or in vain that the Church calls thee her advocate, and the refuge of sinners? Never let it be said that my sins could prevent thee from fulfilling the great office of mercy, which is peculiarly thine own, by which thou art the advocate and mediatress of peace, the only hope, and most secure refuge of the miserable. Never shall it be said that the Mother of God, who for the benefit of the world brought forth the Fountain of Mercy, denied her mercy to any sinner who had recourse to her. Thine office is that of peacemaker between God and men: let, then, the greatness of thy compassion, and which far exceeds my sins, move thee to help me.

THE ELEVENTH DAY.

HOW GREAT SHOULD BE OUR CONFIDENCE IN MARY, WHO IS THE QUEEN OF MERCY.

As the glorious Virgin Mary has been raised to the dignity of Mother of the King of kings, it is not without reason that the Church honours her, and wishes her to be honoured by all, with the glorious title of Queen. 'If the Son is a King,' says an ancient writer, 'the Mother who begot him is rightly and truly considered a Queen and Sovereign.' 'No sooner had Mary,' says St. Bernardine of Sienna, 'consented to be Mother of the Eternal Word, than she merited by this consent to be made Queen of the world and of all creatures; hence as many creatures as there are who serve God, so many there are who serve Mary: for as angels and men, and all things that are in heaven and on earth, are subject to the empire of God, so are they also under the dominion of Mary.'

Mary then is a Queen: but, for our common consolation, be it known that she is a Queen

so sweet, clement, and so ready to help us in our miseries, that the holy Church wills that we should salute her under the title of Queen of Mercy. 'The title of Queen,' remarks B. Albert the Great, 'differs from that of Empress, which implies severity and rigour, in signifying compassion, and charity towards the poor.' 'The greatness of kings and queens,' says Seneca, 'consists in relieving the wretched;' and whereas tyrants, when they reign, have their own good in view, kings should have that of their subjects at heart.

Kings should then occupy themselves principally in works of mercy, but not so as to forget the just punishments that are to be inflicted on the guilty. It is however not thus with Mary, who, although a Queen, is not a queen of justice, intent on the punishment of the wicked, but a queen of mercy, intent only on commiserating and pardoning sinners. And this is the reason for which the Church requires that we should expressly call her 'the Queen of Mercy.'

But perhaps we may fear that Mary would not deign to interpose for some sinners, on account of their being so overloaded with crimes? Or perhaps we ought to be overawed at the majesty and holiness of this great Queen? 'No,' says St. Gregory, 'for the higher and more holy she is, the greater is

her sweetness and compassion towards sinners, who have recourse to her with the desire to amend their lives.' Kings and queens, with their ostentation of majesty, inspire terror, and cause their subjects to fear to approach them: but what fear, says St. Bernard, can the miserable have to approach this Queen of Mercy, for she inspires no terror, and shows no severity, to those who come to her; but is all sweetness and gentleness.

How great then should be our confidence in this Queen, knowing her great power with God, and that she is so rich and full of mercy, that there is no one living on the earth who does not partake of her compassion and favour. This was revealed by our Blessed Lady herself to St. Bridget, saying, 'I am the Queen of heaven and the Mother of Mercy; I am the joy of the just, and the door through which sinners are brought to God. There is no sinner on earth so accursed as to be deprived of my mercy, for all, if they receive nothing else through my intercession, receive the grace of being less tempted by the devils than they would otherwise have been.' 'No one,' she adds, 'unless the irrevocable sentence has been pronounced' (that is the one pronounced on the damned), 'is so cast off by God, that he will not return to Him, and enjoy His mercy, if he invokes my aid.' 'I am called

by all the Mother of Mercy, and truly the mercy of my Son towards men has made me thus merciful towards them;' and she concludes by saying, 'and therefore miserable will he be, and miserable will he be to all eternity, who, in this life, having it in his power to invoke me, who am so compassionate to all, and so desirous to assist sinners, is miserable enough not to invoke me, and so is damned.'

Let us then fly, and fly always to the feet of this most sweet Queen, if we would be certain of salvation; and if we are alarmed and disheartened at the sight of our sins, let us remember, that it is in order to save the greatest and most abandoned sinners, who recommend themselves to her, that Mary is made the Queen of Mercy.

EXAMPLE.

A noble youth, named Eskill, was sent by the prince, his father, to Hildesheim, a city of Saxony, to study, but he gave himself up to a disorderly life. He afterwards fell so dangerously ill that he received Extreme Unction. While in this state he had a vision: he found himself shut up in a fiery furnace, and believed himself already in hell; but he then seemed to escape from it by a hole, and took refuge

in a great palace, in an apartment of which he saw the most Blessed Virgin Mary, who said to him, 'Presumptuous man that thou art, dost thou dare to appear before me? Depart hence, and go to that fire which thou hast deserved.' The young man then besought the Blessed Virgin to have mercy on him; and then addressed himself to some persons who were there present, and entreated them to recommend him to Mary. They did so, and the Divine Mother replied, 'But you do not know the wicked life which he leads, and that he does not even deign to salute me with a Hail Mary.' His advocates replied, 'But, Lady, he will change his life;' and the young man added, 'Yes, I promise in good earnest to amend, and I will be thy devout client.' The Blessed Virgin's anger was then appeased, and she said to him, 'Well, I accept thy promise; be faithful to me, and meanwhile, with my blessing, be delivered from death and hell.' With these words the vision disappeared. Eskill returned to himself, and blessing Mary, related to others the grace which he had received; and from that time he led a holy life, always preserving great devotion to our Blessed Lady. He became archbishop of Lund, in Sweden, where he converted many to the faith. Towards the end of his life, on account of his age, he renounced his archbishopric, and be-

came a monk in Clairvaux, where he lived for four years, and died a holy death. Hence he is numbered, by some authors, amongst the Cistercian Saints.

PRAYER.

O, Mother of my God, and my Lady Mary: as a beggar, all wounded and sore, presents himself before a great queen, so do I present myself before thee, who art the Queen of heaven and earth. From the lofty throne on which thou sittest, disdain not, I implore thee, to cast thine eyes on me, a poor sinner. God has made thee so rich that thou mightest assist the poor, and has constituted thee Queen of Mercy, in order that thou mightest relieve the miserable. Behold me then, and pity me: behold me, and abandon me not, until thou seest me changed from a sinner into a saint. I know well that I merit nothing; nay more, that I deserve, on account of my ingratitude, to be deprived of the graces that, through thy means, I have already received from God. But thou, who art the Queen of Mercy, seekest not merits, but miseries, in order to help the needy. But who is more needy than I?

O, exalted Virgin, well do I know that thou, who art Queen of the universe, art also my queen; but am I determined to dedicate myself more especially to thy service, in order

that thou mayest dispose of me as thou pleasest. Therefore do I address thee in the words of St. Bonaventure, 'Do thou govern me, O my Queen, and leave me not to myself. Command me; employ me as thou wilt, and chastise me when I do not obey; for the chastisements that come from thy hands will to me be pledges of salvation. I value more the being thy servant, than being ruler of the earth. I am thine; save me.' Accept me, O Mary, for thine own, and as thine take charge of my salvation. I will no longer be mine; to thee do I give myself. If, during the time past, I have served thee ill, and lost so many occasions of honouring thee, for the future I will be one of thy most loving and faithful servants. I am determined that from this day forward no one shall surpass me, in honouring and loving thee, my most amiable Queen. This I promise; and this, with thy help, I hope to execute. Amen.

THE TWELFTH DAY.

HOW MUCH OUR CONFIDENCE IN MARY SHOULD BE INCREASED, FROM THE FACT OF HER BEING OUR MOTHER.

It is not without a meaning, or by chance, that Mary's clients call her Mother; and indeed they seem unable to invoke her under any other name, and never tire of calling her Mother. Mother, yes! for she is truly our Mother; not indeed carnally, but spiritually; of our souls and of our salvation. Sin, by depriving our souls of Divine grace, deprived them also of life. Jesus our Redeemer, with an excess of mercy and love, came to restore this life by His own death on the cross, as He Himself declared, 'I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly.' He says more abundantly; for, according to theologians, the benefit of redemption far exceeded the injury done by Adam's sin. So that by reconciling us with God, He made Himself the Father of Souls in the law of grace, as it was foretold by the prophet Isaias, 'He shall be called the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace.' But if Jesus is the Father of our Souls, Mary is also their

Mother; for she, by giving us Jesus, gave us true life; and afterwards, by offering the life of her Son on Mount Calvary for our salvation, she brought us forth to the life of grace.

On two occasions then, according to the holy Fathers, Mary became our Spiritual Mother. And the first, according to Blessed Albert the Great, was when she merited to conceive in her virginal womb the Son of God. St. Bernardine of Sienna says the same thing more distinctly, for he tells us, 'that when at the Annunciation the most Blessed Virgin gave the consent which was expected by the Eternal Word before becoming her Son, she from that moment asked our salvation of God with intense ardour, and took it to heart in such a way, that from that moment, as a most loving mother, she bore us in her womb.'

The second occasion on which Mary became our Spiritual Mother, and brought us forth to the life of grace was when she offered to the Eternal Father the life of her beloved Son on Mount Calvary, with such bitter sorrow and suffering. So that St. Augustine declares that, 'As she then coöperated by her love in the birth of the faithful to the life of grace, she became the Spiritual Mother of all who are members of the one Head, Christ Jesus.' Our most loving Mother was always, and in all, united to the will of God. 'And therefore,'

says St. Bonaventure, 'when she saw the love of the Eternal Father towards men to be so great that, in order to save them, He willed the death of His Son; and, on the other hand, seeing the love of the Son in wishing to die for us: in order to conform herself to this excessive love of both the Father and the Son towards the human race, she also, with her entire will, offered, and consented to, the death of her Son, in order that we might be saved.'

It is true that, according to the prophecy of Isaias, Jesus, in dying for the redemption of the human race, chose to be alone. 'I have trodden the wine-press alone,' but, seeing the ardent desire of Mary to aid in the salvation of man, He disposed it so that she, by the sacrifice and offering of the life of her Jesus, should coöperate in our salvation, and thus become the mother of our souls. This our Saviour signified when, before expiring, He looked down from the cross on His mother and on the disciple St. John, who stood at its foot, and, first addressing Mary, He said, 'Behold thy son;' as it were saying, Behold the whole human race, which by the offer thou makest of My life for the salvation of all, is even now being born to the life of grace. Then, turning to the disciple, He said, 'Behold thy mother.' 'By these words,' says St. Bernardine of Sienna, 'Mary, by reason of the

love she bore them, became the Mother, not only of St. John, but of all men.' And Silveira remarks, that St. John himself, in stating this fact in his Gospel, says, 'Then He said to the disciple, Behold thy mother.' Here observe well that Jesus Christ did not address Himself to John, but to the disciple, in order to show that He then gave Mary to all who are His disciples; that is to say, to all Christians, that she might be their mother. Be of good heart then, all you who are children of Mary. Remember that she accepts as her children all those who choose to be so. Rejoice! Why do you fear to be lost, when such a Mother defends and protects you? 'Say, then, O my soul, with great confidence, I will rejoice and be glad; for whatever the judgment to be pronounced on me may be, it depends on and must come from my brother and mother.' 'Thus,' says St. Bonaventure, 'it is that each one who loves this good Mother, and relies on her protection, should animate himself to confidence, remembering that Jesus is our brother, and Mary our Mother.' The same thought makes St. Anselm cry out with joy, and encourage us, saying, 'O, happy confidence! O, safe refuge; the Mother of God is my mother! How firm then should be our confidence, since our salvation depends on the judgment of a good brother and a tender mo-

ther.' It is, then, our Mother who calls us, and says, in these words of the Book of Proverbs, 'He that is a little one, let him turn to me.' Children have always on their lips their mother's name, and in every fear, in every danger, they immediately cry out, Mother, mother! Ah, most sweet Mary! ah, most loving Mother! this is precisely what thou desirest: that we should become children, and call on thee in every danger, and at all times have recourse to thee, because thou desirest to help and save us, as thou hast saved all who have had recourse to thee.

EXAMPLE.

In the history of the foundations of the Society of Jesus in the kingdom of Naples, we read the following account of a young Scotch nobleman, named William Elphinstone. He was related to king James, and lived for some time in the heresy in which he was born. Enlightened by Divine grace, he began to perceive his errors, and having gone to France, with the help of a good Jesuit father, who was also a Scotchman, and still more by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, he at length discovered the truth, abjured his heresy, and became a Catholic. From France he went to Rome; and there a friend, finding him one day weeping and in great affliction, inquired the cause of

his grief. He replied, that during the night his mother, who was lost, appeared to him, and said: 'It is well for thee, son, that thou hast entered the true Church, for as I died in heresy, I am lost.' From that moment he redoubled his devotion towards Mary, choosing her for his only Mother, and by her he was inspired with the thought of embracing the religious state, and he bound himself to do so by vow. Being in delicate health, he went to Naples for change of air, and there it was the will of God that he should die, and die as a religious; for shortly after his arrival, finding himself at the last extremity, by his prayers and tears he moved the superiors to accept him, and in presence of the most Blessed Sacrament, when he received it as viaticum, he pronounced his vows, and was declared a member of the Society of Jesus. After this it was most touching to hear with what tenderness he thanked his Mother Mary, for having snatched him from heresy, and led him to die in the true Church, and in the house of God, surrounded by his religious brethren. This made him exclaim: 'O, how glorious is it to die in the midst of so many angels.' When exhorted to repose a little, 'Ah,' he replied, 'this is no time for repose, now that I am at the close of my life.' Before expiring, he said to those who surrounded him: 'Brothers, do you not see the

angels of Heaven here present who assist me?' One of the religious having heard him mutter some words, asked him what he said. He replied, that his guardian angel had revealed to him that he would remain but a very short time in purgatory, and that he would soon go to heaven. He then entered into a colloquy with his sweet Mother Mary, and like a child that abandons itself to rest in the arms of its mother, he exclaimed: '*Mother, mother!*' and sweetly expired. Shortly afterwards a devout religious learnt by revelation that he was already in Heaven.

PRAYER.

O most holy Mother Mary, how is it possible that I, having so holy a Mother, should be so wicked? a Mother all burning with the love of God, and I loving creatures; a Mother so rich in virtue, and I so poor? Ah, most amiable Mother, it is true that I do not deserve any longer to be thy son, for by my wicked life I have rendered myself unworthy of so great an honour. I am satisfied that thou shouldst accept me for thy servant; and, in order to be admitted amongst the vilest of them, I am ready to renounce all the kingdoms of the world. Yes, I am satisfied. But still thou must not forbid me to call thee Mother. This name consoles and fills me with tenderness, and re-

minds me of my obligation to love thee. This name excites me to great confidence in thee. When my sins and the Divine justice fill me most with consternation, I am all consoled at the thought that thou art my Mother. Allow me then to call thee Mother, my most amiable Mother! Thus do I call thee, and thus will I always call thee. Thou, after God, must be my hope, my refuge, my love, in this valley of tears. Thus do I hope to die, breathing forth my soul into thy holy hands, and saying, My Mother, my Mother Mary, help me, have pity on me! Amen.

THE THIRTEENTH DAY.

ON THE GREATNESS OF THE LOVE WHICH THIS MOTHER BEARS US.

MARY is our mother, not according to the flesh, but by love, 'I am the Mother of fair love;' hence it is the love only that she bears us that makes her our Mother, and therefore some one remarks 'that she glories in being a Mother of love, because she is all love towards us whom she has adopted for her children.' And who can ever tell the love that Mary bears us miserable creatures? Arnold of Chartres tells us that 'at the death of Jesus Christ, she desired with immense ardour to die with her Son, for love of us;' so much so, adds St. Ambrose, that whilst 'her Son hung on the cross, Mary offered herself to the executioners' to give her life for us.

But let us consider the reasons of this love, for then we shall be better able to understand how much this good Mother loves us. The first reason for the great love that Mary bears to men, is the great love that she bears to God; love towards God and love towards our neigh-

other acts of homage, the pious maiden always endeavoured to serve and honour her beloved Lady. But let us now see how the good Mother on her part recompensed the visits and the affection of her child. She fell ill, and was brought to the point of death. It so happened that two religious were passing that way, and, fatigued with their journey, sat down under a tree to rest; one fell asleep, and the other remained awake; but both had the same vision. They saw a troop of most beautiful ladies, and amongst these was one who in beauty and majesty far surpassed them all. One of the religious addressed himself to her: 'Lady, who art thou, and where art thou going by these rugged ways?' 'I am,' she replied, 'the Mother of God, and am going with these holy virgins to a neighbouring cottage to visit a dying shepherdess who has so often visited me.' Having said these words, all disappeared. At once these two good servants of God said, 'Let us go also to see her.' They immediately started, and having found the cottage of the dying virgin, they entered it, and found her stretched on a little straw. They saluted her, and she said, 'Brothers, ask our Lord to let you see the company that is assisting me.' They immediately knelt, and saw Mary by the side of the dying girl, holding a crown in her hand, and consoling her. All at once the virgins began to

sing, and at the sound of this sweet harmony her blessed soul left her body. Mary placed the crown on her head, and taking her soul, led it with her to Paradise.

PRAYER.

O Lady, O ravisher of hearts, will I exclaim with St. Bonaventure: O Lady, who with the love and favour thou showest thy servants dost ravish their hearts, ravish also my miserable heart, which desires ardently to love thee! Thou, my Mother, hast enamoured a God with thy beauty, and drawn Him from heaven into thy chaste womb, and shall I live without loving thee? No; I will never rest until I am certain of having obtained thy love; but a constant and tender love towards thee, my Mother, who hast loved me with so much tenderness, even when I was ungrateful towards thee. And what should I now be, O Mary, if thou hadst not obtained so many mercies for me? Since, then, thou didst love me so much when I loved thee not, how much more may I not now hope from thee, now that I love thee? I love thee, O my Mother, and I would that I had a heart to love thee in place of all those unfortunate creatures who love thee not. I would that I could speak with a thousand tongues, that all might know thy greatness,

thy holiness, thy mercy, and the love with which thou lovest all who love thee. Had I riches, I would employ them all for thy honour. Had I subjects, I would make them all thy lovers. In fine, if the occasion presented itself, I would lay down my life for thy glory. I love thee then, O my Mother; but at the same time I fear that I do not love thee as I ought; for I hear that love makes lovers like the person loved. If then I see myself so unlike thee, it is a mark that I do not love thee. Thou art so pure, and I defiled with many sins! Thou so humble, and I so proud! Thou so holy, and I so wicked! This, then, is what thou hast to do, O Mary; since thou lovest me, make me like thee. Thou hast all power to change hearts; take then mine and change it. Show the world what thou canst do for those who love thee. Make me a Saint; make me thy worthy child. This is my hope.

THE FOURTEENTH DAY.

MARY IS THE MOTHER OF REPENTANT SINNERS.

Our Blessed Lady told St. Bridget that she was the Mother not only of the just and innocent, but also of sinners, provided they were willing to repent. O, how prompt does a sinner (desirous of amendment, and who flies to her feet) find this good Mother to embrace and help him, far more so than any earthly mother! But whoever aspires to be a child of this great Mother must first abandon sin, and then may hope to be accepted as such.

So long, then, as a sinner is obstinate, Mary cannot love him; but if he (finding himself chained by some passion which keeps him a slave of hell) recommends himself to the Blessed Virgin, and implores her, with confidence and perseverance, to withdraw him from the state of sin in which he is, there can be no doubt but this good Mother will extend her powerful hand to him, will deliver him from his chains, and lead him to a state of salvation. The doctrine that all prayers and works performed in a state of sin are sins, was condemned as heretical by the sacred Council

of Trent. St. Bernard says, that although prayer in the mouth of a sinner is devoid of beauty, on account of its being unaccompanied by charity, nevertheless it is useful, and obtains grace to abandon sin; for, as St. Thomas teaches, the prayer of a sinner, though without merit, is an act which obtains the grace of forgiveness, since the power of impetration is founded not on the merits of him who asks, but on the divine goodness, and the merits and promises of Jesus Christ, who has said, 'Every one that asketh receiveth.' The same thing must be said of prayers offered to the Divine Mother. 'If he who prays,' says St. Anselm, 'does not merit to be heard, the merits of the Mother, to whom he recommends himself, will intercede effectually.' Therefore, St. Bernard exhorts all sinners to have recourse to Mary, invoking her with great confidence; for though the sinner does not himself merit the graces which he asks, yet he receives them, because this Blessed Virgin asks and obtains them from God, on account of her own merits. 'If a mother,' continues the same Saint, 'knew that her two sons bore a mortal enmity to one another, and that each plotted against the other's life, would she not exert herself to her utmost in order to reconcile them?' This would be the duty of a good mother. And thus it is, the Saint goes on to say, that Mary acts; for

she is the Mother of Jesus, and the Mother of men. When she sees a sinner at enmity with Jesus Christ, she cannot endure it, and does all in her power to make peace between them.

This most benign Lady only requires that the sinner should recommend himself to her, and purpose amendment. When Mary sees a sinner at her feet, imploring her mercy, she does not consider the crimes with which he is loaded, but the intention with which he comes; and if this is good, even should he have committed all possible sins, the most loving Mother embraces him, and does not disdain to heal the wounds of his soul; for she is not only *called* the Mother of Mercy, but is so truly and indeed, and shows herself such by the love and tenderness with which she assists us all. And this is precisely what the Blessed Virgin herself said to St. Bridget: 'However much a man sins, I am ready immediately to receive him when he repents; nor do I pay attention to the number of his sins, but only to the intention with which he comes; I do not disdain to anoint and heal his wounds; for I am called, and truly am, the Mother of Mercy.'

Mary is the Mother of sinners who wish to repent, and as a Mother she cannot do otherwise than compassionate them; nay more, she seems to feel the miseries of her poor children as if they were her own. When the Canaan-

itish woman begged our Lord to deliver her daughter from the devil who possessed her, she said, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David, my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil.' But since the daughter, and not the mother, was tormented, she should rather have said, 'Lord,' take compassion *on my daughter;* and not, Have mercy on me; but no, she said, 'Have mercy on me,' and was right; for the sufferings of children are felt by their mothers as if they were their own. And it is precisely thus, says Richard of St. Lawrence, that Mary prays to God when she recommends a sinner to Him who has had recourse to her; she cries out for the sinful soul, 'Have mercy on *me!*' 'My Lord,' she seems to say, 'this poor soul that is in sin is my daughter, and therefore, pity, not so much her, as me, who am her Mother.' Would that all sinners had recourse to this sweet Mother; for then certainly all would be pardoned by God! 'O Mary,' exclaims St. Bonaventure, in rapturous astonishment, 'thou embracest with maternal affection a sinner despised by the whole world, nor dost thou leave him until thou hast reconciled the poor creature with his judge;' meaning, that the sinner whilst in a state of sin is hated and loathed by all, even by inanimate creatures; fire, air, and earth would chastise him, and avenge the honour of their outraged Lord.

But if this unhappy creature flies to Mary, will Mary reject him? O, no: provided he goes to her for help, and in order to amend, she will embrace him with the affection of a mother, and will not let him go, until, by her powerful intercession, she has reconciled him with God, and reinstated him in grace.

EXAMPLE.

In Turin, in the year 1610, there was an obstinate heretic, who even on his death-bed would not renounce his errors, notwithstanding all that was said to him by many priests who attended upon him during eight successive days. At length one of them almost forced him to have recourse to Mary, with these words: 'Mother of Jesus, help me.' The heretic, as if awaking from a profound sleep, then said, 'I wish to die a Catholic:' he was thereupon reconciled with the Church, and in two hours expired.

PRAYER.

O my sovereign Queen and worthy Mother of my God, most holy Mary: I, seeing myself, as I do, so despicable, and loaded with so many sins, ought not to presume to call thee Mother, or even to approach thee; yet I will not allow my miseries to deprive me of the consolation

and confidence that I feel in calling thee Mother; I know well that I deserve that thou shouldst reject me; but I beseech thee to remember all that thy Son Jesus has endured for me, and then reject me if thou canst. I am a wretched sinner, who, more than all others, have despised the infinite majesty of God: but the evil is done. To thee have I recourse; thou canst help me: my Mother, help me. Say not that thou canst not do so; for I know that thou art all powerful, and that thou obtainest whatever thou desirest of God; and if thou sayest that thou wilt not help me, tell me at least to whom I can apply in this my so great misfortune. Either pity me, will I say, with the devout St. Anselm, 'O, my Jesus, and forgive me, or do thou pity me, my mother Mary, by interceding for me, or at least tell me to whom I can have recourse, who is more compassionate, or in whom I can have greater confidence than in thee.' O, no; neither on earth, nor in heaven, can I find any one who has more compassion for the miserable, or who is better able to assist me. Thou, O Jesus, art my Father, and thou, Mary, art my Mother. You both love the most miserable, and go seeking them in order to save them. I deserve hell and am the most miserable of all. But you need not seek me, nor do I presume to ask so much. I now present myself before

you with a certain hope that I shall not be abandoned. Behold me at your feet; my Jesus, forgive me; my Mother Mary, help me.

THE FIFTEENTH DAY.

MARY IS THE HOPE OF ALL.

MODERN heretics cannot endure that we should salute and call Mary, our Hope: 'Hail, our Hope.' They say, that God alone is our hope, and that He curses those who put their trust in creatures, in these words of the prophet Jeremias: 'Cursed be the man that trusteth in man.' Mary, they exclaim, is a creature; and how can a creature be our hope? This is what the heretics say; but in spite of it, the holy Church obliges all ecclesiastics and religious each day to raise their voices, and in the name of all the faithful, invoke and call Mary by the sweet name of 'our Hope,'—the Hope of all.

The angelical Doctor St. Thomas says, that we can place our hope in a person in two ways: as a principal cause, and as a mediate one. Those who hope for a favour from a king, hope it from him as lord; they hope for it from his minister or favourite as an intercessor. If the favour is granted, it comes primarily from the king, but it comes through the instrumentality of the favourite; and in this case, he who seeks

the favour is right in calling his intercessor, his hope. The King of Heaven, being infinite goodness, desires in the highest degree to enrich us with His graces; but, because confidence is requisite on our part, and in order to increase it in us, He has given us His own Mother to be our Mother and Advocate, and to her He has given all power to help us; and, therefore, He wills that we should repose our hope of salvation and of every blessing in her. Those who place their hopes in creatures alone, independently of God, as sinners do, and in order to obtain the friendship and favour of a man, fear not to outrage His Divine Majesty, are most certainly cursed by God, as the prophet Jeremias says. But those who hope in Mary, as Mother of God, who is able to obtain graces and eternal life for them, are truly blessed and acceptable to the heart of God, who desires to see that greatest of His creatures honoured; for she loved and honoured Him in this world more than all men and angels put together. And, therefore, we justly and reasonably call the Blessed Virgin our Hope, trusting, as Cardinal Bellarmin says, 'that we shall obtain, through her intercession, that which we should not obtain by our own unaided prayers.' 'We pray to her,' says the learned Suarez, 'in order that the dignity of the intercessor may supply for our own unworthiness, so that,' he continues,

'to implore the Blessed Virgin in such a spirit, is not diffidence in the mercy of God, but fear of our own unworthiness.'

It is, then, not without reason that the holy Church, in the words of Ecclesiasticus, calls Mary 'the Mother of Holy Hope.' She is the mother who gives birth to holy hope in our hearts; not to the hope of the vain and transitory goods of this life, but of the immense and eternal goods of heaven. 'Hail, then, O hope of my soul,' exclaims St. Ephrem, addressing this Divine Mother; 'hail, O certain salvation of Christians; hail, O helper of sinners; hail, fortress of the faithful and salvation of the world.' Other Saints remind us, that after God, our only Hope is Mary; and, therefore, they call her, 'after God, their only Hope.' And St. Ephrem, reflecting on the present order of providence, by which God wills that all who are saved should be saved by the means of Mary, thus addresses her, 'O, Lady, cease not to watch over us; preserve and guard us under the wings of thy compassion and mercy, for, after God, we have no hope but in thee.'

We need not, then, be surprised, that St. Antoninus applies the following verse of the Book of Wisdom to Mary: 'Now all good things came to me together with her.' For as this Blessed Virgin is the Mother and dispenser of all good things, the whole world, and more

particularly each individual who lives in it as a devout client of this great Queen, may say with truth, that with devotion to Mary, both he and the world have obtained everything good and perfect. And, therefore, St. Bonaventure says, 'That we ought all to keep our eyes constantly fixed on Mary's hands, that through them we may receive the graces that we desire.'

O, how many who were once proud, have become humble by devotion to Mary! how many who were passionate, have become meek! how many in the midst of darkness, have found light! how many who were in despair, have found confidence! how many who were lost, have found salvation by the same powerful means! And this she clearly foretold in the house of Elizabeth, in her own sublime canticle: 'Behold, from henceforth, all generations shall call me blessed.' And St. Bernard, interpreting her words, says, 'all generations call thee blessed, because thou hast given life and glory to all nations, for in thee sinners find pardon, and the just perseverance in the grace of God.'

O God, how tender are the sentiments of confidence expressed by the enamoured St. Bonaventure towards Jesus, our most loving Redeemer, and Mary our most loving Advocate. He says, 'Whatever God foresees to be

my lot, I know that He cannot refuse Himself to any one who loves Him and seeks for Him with his whole heart. I will embrace Him with my love, and if He does not bless me, I will still cling to Him so closely that He will be unable to go without me. If I can do nothing else, at least I will hide myself in His wounds, and taking up my dwelling there, it will be in Himself alone that He will find me.' And the Saint concludes, 'If my Redeemer rejects me, on account of my sins, and drives me from His sacred feet, I will cast myself at those of His beloved Mother, Mary, and there I will remain prostrate until she has obtained my forgiveness; for this Mother of Mercy knows not, and has never known, how to do otherwise than compassionate the miserable, and comply with the desires of the most destitute who fly to her for succour; and, therefore,' he says, 'if not by duty, at least by compassion, she will engage her Son to pardon me.'

EXAMPLE.

A Lutheran lady, at Augsburg, in Germany, who was obstinate in her heresy, was one day passing before a Catholic chapel, and out of curiosity entered it; she saw there an image of Mary, with the infant Jesus in her arms, and felt inspired to make her an offering. She

went to her house, and took a piece of silk which she offered to the Blessed Virgin. On her return home, this good mother enlightened her to see the errors of her sect; she immediately went to seek some Catholics, abjured heresy, and was converted to God.

PRAYER.

O Mother of holy love, our life, our refuge, and our hope, thou well knowest that thy Son, Jesus Christ, not content with being Himself our perpetual advocate with the Eternal Father, has willed that thou also shouldst interest thyself with Him, in order to obtain the Divine mercies for us. He has decreed that thy prayers should aid our salvation, and has made them so efficacious that they obtain all that they ask. To thee, therefore, who art the hope of the miserable, do I, a wretched sinner, turn my eyes. I trust, O Lady, that in the first place, through the merits of Jesus Christ, and then, through thy intercession, I shall be saved. Of this, I am certain, and my confidence in thee is such, that if my eternal salvation was in my own hands, I should place it in thine, for I rely more on thy mercy and protection than on all my own works. My Mother and my hope, abandon me not, though I deserve that thou shouldst do so. See my miseries, and

being moved thereby with compassion, help and save me. I own that I have too often closed my heart, by my sins, against the lights and helps that thou hast procured for me from our Lord. But thy compassion for the miserable, and thy power with God, far surpass the number and malice of my sins. It is well known to all, both in heaven and on earth, that whosoever is protected by thee is certainly saved. All may forget me, provided only that thou dost remember me, O Mother of an Omnipotent God. Tell Him that I am thy servant: say only that thou defendest me, and I shall be saved. O Mary, I trust in thee; in this hope I live; in it I desire and hope to die.

THE SIXTEENTH DAY.

MARY IS THE HOPE OF SINNERS.

In the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, we read, that 'God made two great lights; a greater light to rule the day; and a lesser light to rule the night.' Cardinal Hugo says, that 'Christ is the greater light to rule the just, and Mary, the lesser to rule sinners.' Meaning that the sun is a figure of Jesus Christ, whose light is enjoyed by the just who live in the clear day of Divine grace; and that the moon is a figure of Mary, by whose means those who are in the night of sin are enlightened. Since Mary is this auspicious luminary, and is so for the benefit of poor sinners, should any one have been so unfortunate as to fall into the night of sin, what is he to do? Innocent III. replies, 'whoever is in the night of sin let him cast his eyes on the moon, let him implore Mary.' Since he has lost the light of the sun of justice, by losing the grace of God, let him turn to the moon, and beseech Mary, and she will certainly give him light to see the misery of his state, and strength to leave it without delay. St.

Methodius says, 'that by the prayers of Mary, almost innumerable sinners are converted.'

One of the titles which is the most encouraging to poor sinners, and under which the Church teaches us to invoke Mary in the Litany of Loretto, is that of 'Refuge of sinners.' In Judea, in ancient times, there were cities of refuge, in which criminals, who fled there for protection, were exempt from the punishments which they had deserved. Nowadays, these cities are not so numerous; there is but one, and that is Mary, of whom the Psalmist says, 'Glorious things are said of thee, O city of God.' But this city differs from the ancient ones in this respect, that in the latter all kinds of criminals did not find refuge, nor was the protection extended to every class of crime; but under the mantle of Mary, all sinners, without exception, find refuge for every sin that they may have committed, provided only that they go there to seek for this protection. 'I am the city of refuge,' says St. John Damascene, in the name of our Queen, 'to all who fly to me.'

And it is sufficient to have recourse to her, for whoever has the good fortune to enter this city need not speak to be saved. 'Assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the fenced city, and let us be silent there,' to speak in the words of the Prophet Jeremias. This city,

says blessed Albert the Great, is the most holy Virgin fenced in with grace and glory. 'And let us be silent there,' that is, continues an interpreter, 'Because we dare not invoke the Lord, whom we have offended, she will invoke and ask.' For if we do not presume to ask our Lord to forgive us, it will suffice to enter this city and be silent, for Mary will speak and ask all that we require. And for this reason, a devout author exhorts all sinners to take refuge under the mantle of Mary, exclaiming, 'Fly, O Adam and Eve, and all you, their children, who have outraged God; fly, and take refuge in the bosom of this good Mother; know you not that she is our only city of refuge,' 'the only hope of sinners,' as she is also called in a sermon by an ancient writer, found in the works of St. Augustine.

In the revelations of St. Bridget, Mary is called the 'Star preceding the sun,' giving us thereby to understand, that when devotion towards the Divine Mother begins to manifest itself in a soul that is in a state of sin, it is a certain mark that before long, God will enrich it with His grace. The glorious St. Bonaventure, in order to revive the confidence of sinners in the protection of Mary, places before them the picture of a tempestuous sea, into which sinners have already fallen from the ship of Divine grace, they are already dashed about

on every side, by remorse of conscience and by fear of the judgments of God; they are without light or guide, and are on the point of losing the last breath of hope, and falling into despair; then it is that our Lord, pointing out Mary to them, who is commonly called the 'Star of the Sea,' raises His voice, and says, 'O poor lost sinners, despair not: raise up your eyes, and cast them on this beautiful star; breathe again with confidence, for it will save you from this tempest, and will guide you into the port of salvation.'

It was, then, not without reason that St. Bernard addressed the Blessed Virgin, saying, 'Thou, O Lady, dost not reject any sinner who approaches thee, however loathsome and repugnant he may be. If he asks thy assistance, thou dost not disdain to extend thy compassionate hand to him, to extricate him from the gulf of despair.'

It is related, in the sacred scriptures, that Booz allowed Ruth 'to gather the ears of corn, after the reapers.' St. Bonaventure says, 'that as Ruth found favour with Booz, so has Mary found favour with our Lord, and is also allowed to gather the ears of corn, after the reapers. The reapers followed by Mary are all evangelical labourers, missionaries, preachers, and confessors, who are constantly reaping souls for God. But there are some hardened and

rebellious souls, which are abandoned even by these. To Mary alone is it granted to save them, by her powerful intercession.' Truly unfortunate are they, if they do not allow themselves to be gathered, even by this sweet Lady. They will indeed be most certainly lost and accursed. But on the other hand, blessed is he who has recourse to this good Mother. 'There is not in the world,' says the devout Blosius, 'any sinner, however revolting and wicked, who is despised or rejected by Mary; she can, she wills, and she knows, how to reconcile him to her most beloved Son, if only he will seek her assistance.'

EXAMPLE.

Blessed John Herold, who out of humility called himself the Disciple, relates, that there was a married man, who lived at enmity with God. His wife, who was a virtuous woman, being unable to engage him to give up sin, begged him, in the wretched state in which he was, to practise at least the devotion of saluting our Blessed Lady with a 'Hail Mary,' each time that he might pass before her picture. He began to do so. One night this wretched man was on his way to commit a crime, when he perceived a light at a distance: he drew near to see what it was, and found that it was

a lamp, burning before a devout picture of Mary, holding the child Jesus in her arms. He at once, according to custom, said the 'Hail Mary.' In the same moment, he beheld the Divine Infant covered with wounds, from which fresh blood was streaming. Terrified, and at the same time moved to compassion, at this sight, he reflected that it was he, who, by his sins, had thus wounded his Redeemer. He burst into tears, but the Divine Infant turned His back to him. Filled with shame, he appealed to the most Blessed Virgin, saying: 'Mother of Mercy, thy Son rejects me: I can find no advocate more compassionate and more powerful than thee, for thou art His Mother; my Queen, do thou help me, and intercede for me.' The Divine Mother, speaking from the picture, replied: 'You sinners call me Mother of Mercy, but, at the same time, you cease not to make me a Mother of Sorrows, by crucifying my Son afresh, and renewing my sorrows.' But as Mary can never let any one leave her feet disconsolate, she began to implore her Son to pardon this miserable wretch. Jesus continued to show Himself unwilling to do so. The most Blessed Virgin, seeing this, placed Him in the niche, and, prostrating herself before Him, said: 'My Son, I will not leave Thy feet until Thou hast pardoned this sinner.' 'My Mother,' then said Jesus, 'I can

deny thee nothing; thou willest that he should be forgiven; for love of thee I pardon him; make him come and kiss My wounds.' The sinner, sobbing and weeping, did so, and, as he kissed them, the wounds were healed. Jesus then embraced him, as a mark of forgiveness, and he changed his life, which, from that time, was one of holiness; and he always preserved the most tender love and gratitude towards this Blessed Virgin, who had obtained him so great a grace.

PRAYER.

O most pure Virgin Mary, I worship thy most holy heart which was the delight and resting-place of God, a heart overflowing with humility, purity, and Divine love. I, an unhappy sinner, approach thee with a heart all loathsome and wounded. O compassionate Mother, disdain me not on this account; let such a sight rather move thee to greater tenderness, and excite thee to help me. Do not stay to seek virtues or merit in me before assisting me. I am lost, and the only thing I merit is hell. See only my confidence in thee and the purpose I have to amend. Consider all that Jesus has done and suffered for me, and then abandon me if thou canst. I offer thee all the pains of His life; the cold that He endured in

the stable; His journey into Egypt; the blood which He shed; the poverty, sweats, sorrows, and death that He endured for me; and this in thy presence. For the love of Jesus take charge of my salvation. Ah, my Mother, I will not and cannot fear that thou wilt reject me, now that I have recourse to thee and ask thy help. Did I fear this, I should be offering an outrage to thy mercy, which goes in quest of the wretched, in order to help them. O Lady, deny not thy compassion to one to whom Jesus has not denied His blood. But the merits of this blood will not be applied to me unless thou recommendest me to God. Through thee do I hope for salvation. I ask not for riches, honours, or earthly goods. I seek only the grace of God, love towards thy Son, the accomplishment of His will, and His heavenly kingdom, that I may love Him eternally. Is it possible that thou wilt not hear me? No: for already thou hast granted my prayer, as I hope; already thou prayest for me; already thou obtainest me the graces that I ask; already thou takest me under thy protection: my Mother, abandon me not. Never, never cease to pray for me until thou seest me safe in heaven at thy feet, blessing and thanking thee for ever. Amen.

THE SEVENTEENTH DAY.

ON THE PROMPTITUDE OF MARY IN ASSISTING THOSE WHO INVOKE HER.

TRULY unfortunate are we poor children of Eve; for, guilty before God of her fault, and condemned to the same penalty, we have to wander about in this valley of tears as exiles from our country, and to weep over our many afflictions of body and soul. But blessed is he who, in the midst of these sorrows, often turns to the comfortress of the world, to the refuge of the unfortunate, to the great Mother of God, and devoutly calls upon her and invokes her! 'Blessed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates.' Blessed, says Mary, is he who listens to my counsels, and watches continually at the gate of my mercy, and invokes my intercession and aid. The holy Church carefully teaches us her children with what attention and confidence we should unceasingly have recourse to this loving protectress.

Nor should the multitude of our sins diminish our confidence, that Mary will grant our petitions, when we cast ourselves at her feet. She

is the Mother of Mercy, but mercy would not be needed did none exist who require it. On this subject, Richard of St. Lawrence remarks, 'That as a good mother does not shrink from applying a remedy to her child, infected with ulcers, however nauseous and revolting they may be, so also is our good Mother unable to abandon us, when we have recourse to her, that she may heal the wounds caused by our sins, however loathsome they may have rendered us.'

This good Mother's compassion is so great, and the love she bears us is such, that she does not even wait for our prayers in order to assist us; but, as it is expressed in the Book of Wisdom, 'she preventeth them that covet her, so that she first showeth herself unto them.' St. Anselm applies these words to Mary, and says that she is beforehand with those who desire her protection. By this we are to understand, that she obtains us many favours from God before we have recourse to her. From this Novarino argues, that 'If Mary, unasked, is thus prompt to succour the needy, how much more so will she be to succour those who invoke her and ask for her help?'

Should there be any one who doubts as to whether Mary will aid him if he has recourse to her, Innocent III. thus reproves him: 'Who is there that ever, when in the night of sin, had recourse to this sweet Lady without being

relieved?' 'And who ever,' exclaims the blessed Eutichian, 'faithfully implored thy all-powerful aid and was abandoned by thee?' Indeed no one; for thou canst relieve the most wretched, and save the most abandoned. Such a case certainly never did, and never will occur. 'I am satisfied,' says St. Bernard, 'that whoever has had recourse to thee, O Blessed Virgin, in his wants, and can remember that he did so in vain, should no more speak of or praise thy mercy.'

'Sooner,' says the devout Blosius, 'would heaven and earth be destroyed, than would Mary fail to assist any one who asks for her help, provided he does so with a good intention, and with confidence in her.' St. Anselm, to increase our confidence, adds, that 'when we have recourse to this Divine Mother, not only we may be sure of her protection, but that often we shall be heard more quickly, and be thus preserved, if we have recourse to Mary and call on her holy name, than we should be if we called on the name of Jesus our Saviour;' and the reason he gives for it is, 'that to Jesus as a Judge, it belongs also to punish, but mercy alone belongs to the Blessed Virgin as a patroness.' Meaning, that we more easily find salvation by having recourse to the Mother, than by going to the Son—not as if Mary was more powerful than her Son to save us, for we know

that Jesus Christ is our only Saviour, and that He alone, by His merits, has obtained, and obtains salvation for us; but it is for this reason: that when we have recourse to Jesus, we consider Him at the same time as our Judge, to whom it belongs also to chastise ungrateful souls, and therefore the confidence necessary to be heard may fail us; but when we go to Mary, who has no other office than to compassionate us, as Mother of Mercy, and to defend us as our advocate, our confidence is more easily established, and is often greater.

St. Bridget heard our Lord make a most sweet and consoling promise; for in the 50th chapter of the First Book of her Revelations, we read, that Jesus addressed His Mother in the following words: 'Thou shalt present Me with no petition that shall be refused. My Mother, ask what thou wilt, for never will I refuse thee anything; and know,' he added, 'that I promise graciously to hear all those who ask any favour of Me in thy name, though they may be sinners, if only they have the will to amend their lives.' The same thing was revealed to St. Gertrude, when she heard our Divine Redeemer assure His Mother, 'that in His omnipotence He granted her power to show mercy to sinners who invoke her in whatever manner she might please.'

Let all, then, say, with full confidence in the

words of that beautiful prayer addressed to the Mother of Mercy, and commonly attributed to St. Bernard: 'Remember, O most pious Virgin Mary, that it never was heard of in any age that any one having recourse to thy protection was abandoned.' Therefore forgive me, O Mary, if I say that I will not be the first unfortunate creature who has ever had recourse to thee, and was abandoned.

EXAMPLE.

We read in his Life, that St. Francis of Sales experienced the efficacy of this prayer. When he was about seventeen years of age he was residing in Paris, where he was pursuing his studies. At the same time he devoted himself to exercises of piety and to the holy love of God, in which he found the joys of paradise. Our Lord, in order to try him and to strengthen the bands which united him to Himself, allowed the evil spirit to persuade him that all he did was in vain, as he was already condemned in the eternal decrees of God. The darkness and spiritual dryness in which God was pleased at the same time to leave him (for he was then insensible to all the sweeter thoughts of the goodness of God), caused the temptation to have greater power over the heart of the holy youth; and, indeed, it reached such a pitch

that his fears and interior desolation took away his appetite, deprived him of sleep, made him pale and melancholy; so much so, that he excited the compassion of all who saw him.

As long as this terrible storm lasted the Saint could only conceive thoughts and utter words of despondency and bitter grief. 'Then,' said he, 'I am to be deprived of the grace of my God, who hitherto has shown Himself so lovely and sweet to me. O Love, O Beauty, to which I have consecrated all my affections, I am no longer to enjoy thy consolation! O Virgin, Mother of God, the fairest amongst all the daughters of Jerusalem, then I am never to see thee in heaven! Ah! Lady, if I am not to behold thy beautiful countenance in paradise, at least permit me not to blaspheme thee in hell!' Such were the tender sentiments of that afflicted, but, at the same time, loving heart. The temptation had lasted a month, when it pleased our Lord to deliver him by the means of that comfortress of the world, the most Blessed Mary, to whom the Saint had some time before consecrated his virginity, and in whom, as he declared, he had placed all his hopes. One evening, on returning home, he entered a church, and saw a tablet hanging to the wall: he read it, and found the following well-known prayer, commonly called 'of St. Bernard,'—'Remember, O most pious Virgin

Mary, that it never has been heard of in any age, that any one having recourse to thy protection was abandoned.' Falling on his knees before the altar of the Divine Mother, he recited this prayer with tender fervour, renewed his vow of chastity, promised to say the Rosary every day, and then added: 'My Queen, be my advocate with thy Son, whom I dare not approach. My Mother, if I am so unfortunate as not to be able to love my Lord in the next world, and whom I know to be so worthy of love, at least do thou obtain that I may love Him in this world as much as possible. This is the grace that I ask and hope for from thee.' Having thus addressed the Blessed Virgin, he cast himself into the arms of Divine mercy, and resigned himself entirely to the will of God. Scarcely had he finished his prayer, when, in an instant, he was delivered from his temptation by his most sweet Mother; he immediately regained the peace of his soul, and with it his bodily health; and from that time forward lived most devout to Mary, whose praises and mercy he constantly extolled, both in his sermons and writings, during the remainder of his life.

PRAYER.

O Mother of God, Queen of Angels and Hope of men, give ear to one who calls upon

thee, and has recourse to thy protection. Behold me this day prostrate at thy feet; I, a miserable slave of hell, devote myself entirely to thee: I desire to be for ever thy servant. I offer myself to serve and honour thee to the utmost of my power during the whole of my life. I know that the service of one so vile and miserable can be no honour to thee, since I have so grievously offended Jesus, thy Son and my Redeemer. But if thou wilt accept one so unworthy for thy servant, and by thy intercession change, and thus make me worthy, this very mercy will give thee that honour which so miserable a wretch as I can never give thee. Receive me, then, and reject me not, O my Mother. The Eternal Word came from heaven on earth to seek for lost sheep; and to save them He became thy Son. And when one of them goes to thee to find Jesus, wilt thou despise it? The price of my salvation is already paid; my Saviour has already shed His blood, which suffices to save an infinity of worlds. This blood has only to be applied, even to such a one as I am. And that is thy office, O Blessed Virgin; to thee does it belong, as I am told by St. Bernard, to dispense the merits of this blood to whom thou pleasest. To thee does it belong, says St. Bonaventure, to save whomsoever thou willest. O, then, help me, my Queen; my

Queen, save me! To thee do I this day consecrate my whole soul; do thou save it. O Salvation of those who invoke thee, I conclude in the words of the same Saint, 'O Salvation of those who call upon thee, do thou save me!'

THE EIGHTEENTH DAY.

OF THE GREATNESS OF THE POWER OF MARY TO DEFEND THOSE WHO INVOKE HER WHEN TEMPTED BY THE DEVIL.

Not only is the most Blessed Virgin Queen of heaven and of all Saints, but she is also Queen of hell and of all evil spirits; for she overcame them valiantly by her virtues. From the very beginning, God foretold the victory and empire that our Queen would one day obtain over the serpent, when He announced that a woman should come into the world to conquer him: 'I will put enmities between thee and the woman — she shall crush thy head.' And who could this woman, his enemy, be but Mary, who by her fair humility and holy life always conquered him and beat down his strength?

Mary, then, was this great and valiant woman, who conquered the devil and crushed his head, by bringing down his pride; so that, as St. Bernard remarks, this proud spirit, in spite of himself, was beaten down and trampled under foot by this most Blessed Virgin, and as a slave conquered in war, he is

forced always to obey the commands of this Queen.

St. Bruno says 'that Eve was the cause of death,' by allowing herself to be overcome by the serpent; 'but that Mary,' by conquering the devil, 'restored life to us.' And she bound him in such a way that this enemy cannot stir so as to do the least injury to any of her clients.

It is well known that the palm is a sign of victory; and therefore our Queen is placed on a high throne, in sight of all the powers, as a palm, for a sign of the certain victory that all may promise themselves who place themselves under her protection: 'I was exalted like a palm-tree in Cades,' says Ecclesiasticus; 'that is, to defend,' adds blessed Albert the Great. 'My children,' Mary seems to say, 'when the enemy assails you, fly to me; cast your eyes on me, and be of good heart; for as I am your defender, victory is assured to you.' So that recourse to Mary is a most secure means to conquer all the assaults of hell; for she, says St. Bernardine of Sienna, is even the Queen of hell, and Sovereign Mistress of the devils; since she it is who tames and crushes them. He thus expresses his thought: 'The most Blessed Virgin rules over the infernal regions. She is therefore called the ruling Mistress of the devils, because she brings

them into subjection.' For this reason, Mary is said in the sacred Canticles to be 'terrible' to the infernal powers 'as an army in battle array;' and she is called thus terrible because she well knows how to array her power, her mercy, and her prayers, to the discomfiture of her enemies, and for the benefit of her servants, who in their temptations have recourse to her most powerful aid. In confirmation of this, it was revealed to St. Bridget, 'that God had rendered Mary so powerful over the devils, that as often as they assault a devout client who calls on this most Blessed Virgin for help, she, at a single glance, instantly terrifies them, so that they fly far away, preferring to have their pains redoubled rather than see themselves thus subject to the power of Mary.'

The devils tremble even if they only hear the name of Mary. St. Bernard declares that 'in the name of Mary every knee bows; and that the devils not only fear but tremble at the very sound of that name.' And as men fall prostrate with fear if a thunderbolt falls near them, so do the devils if they hear the name of Mary. Thomas à Kempis thus expresses the same sentiment: 'The evil spirits greatly fear the Queen of Heaven, and fly at the sound of her name, as if from fire. At the very sound of the word Mary, they are prostrated as by thunder.' And O, how many

victories have the clients of Mary gained by only making use of her most holy name! It was thus that St. Anthony of Padua was always victorious; thus the blessed Henry Suso; thus so many other lovers of this great Queen conquered.

St. Anselm declares that he himself 'knew, and had seen and heard many who had invoked the name of Mary in time of danger, and were immediately delivered from it.'

'Glorious indeed, and admirable,' exclaims St. Bonaventure, 'is thy name, O Mary; for those who pronounce it at death, need not fear all the powers of hell;' for the devils on hearing that name instantly fly, and leave the soul in peace. The same Saint adds, 'That men do not fear a powerful hostile army as much as the powers of hell fear the name and protection of Mary.' 'Thou, O Lady,' says St. Germanus, 'by the simple invocation of thy most powerful name, givest security to thy servants against all the assaults of the enemy.' O, were Christians but careful in their temptations to pronounce the name of Mary with confidence, never would they fall; for, as blessed Allan remarks, 'At the very sound of these words, Hail, Mary, Satan flies, and hell trembles.' Our Blessed Lady herself revealed to St. Bridget that the enemy flies even from the most abandoned sinners, and who conse-

quently are the farthest from God, and fully possessed by the devil, if they only invoke her most powerful name, with a true purpose of amendment. 'All devils, on hearing this name of Mary, filled with terror, leave the soul.' But at the same time our Blessed Lady added, 'that if the soul does not amend and obliterate its sins by sorrow, the devils almost immediately return and continue to possess it.'

EXAMPLE.

In Ratisbon, there was a Canon Regular of the name of Arnold, surnamed the Pious, on account of the sanctity of his life, and who had the most tender devotion to our Blessed Lady. When at the point of death, and having received the last sacraments, he summoned his religious brethren, and begged that they would not abandon him in his last passage. Scarcely had he uttered these words when, in the presence of all, he began to tremble, to roll his eyes, and, bathed in a cold sweat, with a faltering voice said, 'Ah, do you not see the devils who are endeavouring to drag me to hell?' He then cried out, 'Brothers, implore the aid of Mary for me; in her I confide, she will give me the victory.' On hearing this, his brethren recited the Litany of our Blessed Lady, and as they said, 'Holy

Mary, pray for him,' the dying man exclaimed, 'Repeat, repeat, the name of Mary, for I am already before God's tribunal.' He was silent for a moment, and then added, 'It is true that I did it, but I have done penance for it.' And then turning to our Blessed Lady, he said, 'O Mary, I shall be delivered if thou helpest me.' Again the devils attacked him; but he defended himself with his crucifix and the name of Mary. Thus was the night spent; but no sooner did morning dawn, than Arnold exclaimed with the greatest calmness, and full of holy joy, 'Mary, my sovereign Lady, my refuge, has obtained me pardon and salvation.' Then casting his eyes on that Blessed Virgin who was inviting him to follow her, he said, 'I come, O Lady, I come;' and making an effort to do so even with his body, his soul fled after her to the realms of eternal bliss, as we trust, for he sweetly expired.

PRAYER.

Behold at thy feet, O Mary, my hope, a poor sinner, who has so many times been, by his own fault, the slave of hell. I know that by neglecting to have recourse to thee, my refuge, I allowed myself to be overcome by the devil. Had I always had recourse to thee, had I always invoked thee, I certainly should not have fallen. I trust, O Lady, most worthy

of all our love, that through thee I have already escaped from the hands of the devil, and that God has pardoned me. But I tremble lest at some future period I may again fall into the same bonds. I know that my enemies have not lost the hope of again overcoming me, and already they prepare new assaults and temptations for me. Ah, my Queen and refuge, do thou assist me. Place me under thy mantle; permit me not again to become their slave. I know that thou wilt help me and give me the victory, provided I invoke thee; but I dread lest in my temptations I may forget thee, and neglect to do so. The favour, then, that I seek of thee, and which thou must grant me, O most holy Virgin, is that I may never forget thee, and especially in time of temptation; grant that I may then repeatedly invoke thee, saying, 'O Mary, help me; O Mary, help me.' And when my last struggle with hell comes, at the moment of death, ah then, my Queen, help me more than ever, and thou thyself remind me to call on thee more frequently either with my lips or in my heart; that, being thus filled with confidence, I may expire with thy sweet name, and that of thy Son Jesus, on my lips; that so I may be able to bless thee and praise thee, and not depart from thy feet in paradise for all eternity. Amen.

THE NINETEENTH DAY.

MARY IS AN ADVOCATE WHO IS ABLE TO SAVE ALL.

So great is the authority that mothers possess over their sons, that even if they are monarchs, and have absolute dominion over every person in their kingdom, yet never can mothers become the subjects of their sons. It is true that Jesus now in heaven sits at the right hand of the Father; that is, as St. Thomas explains it, even as man, on account of the hypostatical union with the Person of the Divine Word. He has supreme dominion over all, and also over Mary; it will nevertheless be always true that, for a time, when He was living in this world, He was pleased to humble Himself and to be subject to Mary, as we are told by St. Luke, 'And He was subject to them.' And still more, says St. Ambrose, Jesus Christ having deigned to make Mary His Mother, inasmuch as He was her Son, He was truly obliged to obey her. And for this reason, says Richard of St. Lawrence, 'of other Saints we say, that they are with God; but of Mary alone can it be said, that she was

so far favoured as to be, not only herself submissive to the will of God, but even that God was subject to her will.'

And here we say, that although Mary, now in heaven, can no longer command her Son, nevertheless her prayers are always the prayers of a mother, and, consequently, most powerful to obtain whatever she asks. 'Mary,' says St. Bonaventure, 'has this great privilege, that with her Son, she above all the Saints is most powerful to obtain whatever she wills.' And why? Precisely because they are the prayers of a mother. And therefore, says St. Peter Damian, the Blessed Virgin can do whatever she pleases both in heaven and on earth. She is able to raise even those who are in despair to confidence; and he addresses her in these words: 'All power is given to thee in heaven and on earth, and nothing is impossible to thee, who canst raise those who are in despair to the hope of salvation.' And then he adds, that 'when the Mother goes to seek a favour for us from Jesus Christ' (whom the Saint calls the golden altar of mercy, at which sinners obtain pardon), 'her Son esteems her prayers so greatly, and is so desirous to satisfy her, that when she prays it seems as if she rather commanded than prayed, and was rather a Queen than a handmaid.' Jesus is pleased thus to honour His beloved Mother, who honoured

Him so much during her life, by immediately granting all that she asks or desires. This is beautifully confirmed by St. Germanus, who, addressing our Blessed Lady, says, 'Thou art the Mother of God, and all-powerful to save sinners, and with God thou needest no other recommendation; for thou art the Mother of true life.'

Since the Mother then should have the same power as the Son, rightly has Jesus, who is Omnipotent, made Mary also omnipotent; though, of course, it is always true that, where the Son is Omnipotent by nature, the mother is only so by grace. But that she is so is evident from the fact, that whatever the Mother asks for, the Son never denies her; and this was revealed to St. Bridget, who one day heard Jesus talking with Mary, and thus address her, 'Ask of Me what thou wilt, for no petition of thine can be void.' As if He had said, My Mother, thou knowest how much I love thee; therefore, ask all that thou wilt of Me, for it is not possible that I should refuse thee anything. And the reason that He gave for this was beautiful: 'Because thou never didst deny Me anything on earth, I will deny thee nothing in heaven'—My Mother, when thou wast in the world thou never didst refuse to do anything for the love of Me, and, now that I am in heaven, it is right that I should deny

thee nothing that thou askest. Mary, then, is called omnipotent in the sense in which it can be understood of a creature who is incapable of a Divine attribute. She is omnipotent, because by her prayers she obtains whatever she wills.

With good reason, then, O great advocate, does St. Bernard say, 'Thou willest, and all things are done.' And St. Anselm, 'Whatever thou, O Vigin, willest, can never be otherwise than accomplished.' Thou willest, and all is done. If thou art pleased to raise a sinner from the lowest abyss of misery to the highest degree of sanctity, thou canst do it.

Blessed Albert the Great on this subject makes Mary say: 'I have to be asked that I may will; for if I will a thing, it is necessarily done.' St. Germanus encouraging sinners, who recommend themselves to this advocate, thus addresses her: 'As thou hast, O Mary, the authority of a Mother with God, thou obtainest pardon for the most enormous sinners; since that Lord in all things acknowledges thee as His true and spotless Mother, He cannot do otherwise than grant what thou askest.' And St. George, Archbishop of Nicomedia, says, that Jesus Christ, even as it were to satisfy an obligation under which He placed Himself towards His Mother, when she consented to give Him His human nature, grants all she asks.

Let us conclude with St. Bonaventure, who, considering the great benefit conferred on us by our Lord in giving us Mary for our advocate, thus addresses her: 'O truly immense and admirable goodness of our God, which has been pleased to grant thee, O sovereign Mother, to us miserable sinners for our advocate, in order that thou, by thy powerful intercession, mayest obtain all that thou pleasest for us.' 'O wonderful mercy of our God!' continues the same Saint, 'who, in order that we might not fly on account of the sentence that might be pronounced against us, has given us His own Mother and the patroness of graces, to be our advocate.'

EXAMPLE.

A noble lady, who had an only son, was informed one day that he had been killed. The murderer had by chance taken refuge in her own palace. She then began to reflect that Mary had forgiven the executioners of her Son, and therefore determined that she also would pardon that criminal for the love of the sorrowful Mary. She not only did this, but also provided him with a horse, money, and clothes, that he might escape. Her son then appeared to her, and told her that he was saved, and that for her generous conduct to his enemy, the Divine Mother had delivered

him from purgatory, in which, otherwise, he would have had to suffer for a long time, and that he was then going to paradise.

PRAYER.

I will address thee, O great Mother of God, in the words of St. Bernard: 'Speak, O Lady, for thy Son heareth thee; and whatever thou askest thou wilt obtain.' Speak, speak, then, O Mary, our Advocate, in favour of us poor miserable creatures. Remember that it was also for our good that thou didst receive such great power and so high a dignity. A God was pleased to become thy debtor, by taking humanity of thee, in order that thou mightest at will dispense the riches of Divine mercy to sinners. We are thy servants, devoted in a special manner to thee, of whom I trust that I also am one. We glory in living under thy protection. Since thou doest good to all, even to those who neither know nor honour thee—nay, more, to those who outrage and blaspheme thee—how much more may we not hope from thy benignity, which seeks out the wretched in order to relieve them,—we who honour, love, and confide in thee? We are great sinners, but God has enriched thee with compassion and power far exceeding our iniquities. Thou canst, and

hast the will to save us; and the greater is our unworthiness, the greater shall be our hope, in order to glorify thee the more in heaven, when, by thy intercession, we get there. O, Mother of mercy, we present thee our souls, once cleansed and rendered beautiful in the blood of Jesus Christ; but alas, since that time defiled by sin. To thee do we present them; do thou purify them. Obtain for us true conversion; obtain for us the love of God, perseverance, heaven. We ask thee for much; but what is it? perhaps thou canst not obtain all? It is perhaps too much for the love God bears thee? Ah, no; for thou hast only to open thy lips and ask thy divine Son; He will deny thee nothing. Pray, then, pray, O Mary, for us; pray, thou wilt certainly obtain all; and we shall with the same certainty obtain the kingdom of heaven.

THE TWENTIETH DAY.

MARY IS SO TENDER AN ADVOCATE, THAT SHE DOES NOT REFUSE TO DEFEND THE CAUSE EVEN OF THE MOST MISERABLE.

So many are the reasons that we have for loving this our most loving Queen, that if Mary was praised throughout the world—if, in every sermon, Mary alone was spoken of—if all men gave their lives for Mary—still all would be little in comparison with the homage and gratitude that we owe her in return for the tender love she bears to men, and even to the most miserable sinners, who preserve the slightest spark of devotion for her. Blessed Raymond Jordano used to say, 'that Mary knows not how to do otherwise than love those who love her; and that even she does not disdain to serve those who serve her; and in favour of such a one, should he be a sinner, she uses all her power, in order to obtain his forgiveness from her blessed Son.' And he adds, 'that her benignity and mercy are so great, that no one, however enormous his sins may be, should fear to cast himself at her feet; for she never can reject any one who has recourse to her.'

'Mary, as our most loving advocate, herself offers the prayers of her servants to God, and especially those which are placed in her hands; for as the Son intercedes for us with the Father, so does she intercede with the Son, and does not cease to make interest with both, for the great affair of our salvation, and to obtain for us the graces we ask.' With good reason, then, does Denis the Carthusian call the Blessed Virgin 'the singular refuge of the lost, the hope of the most abandoned, and the advocate of all sinners who have recourse to her.'

But should there by chance be a sinner who, though not doubting her power, might doubt the compassion of Mary, fearing perhaps that she might be unwilling to help him, on account of the greatness of his sins, let him take courage from the words of St. Bonaventure: 'The great, the special privilege of Mary is, that she is all-powerful with her Son.' 'But,' adds the Saint, 'to what purpose would Mary have such great power, if she cared not for us?' 'No,' he concludes, 'let us not doubt, but be certain, and let us always thank our Lord and His Divine Mother for it; that, in proportion as her power with God exceeds that of all the Saints, so is she, in the same proportion, our most loving advocate, and the one who is the most solicitous for our welfare.'

Mary takes care of all, even of sinners; in-

deed, she glories in being called, in a special manner, their advocate, as she herself declared to the venerable sister, Mary Villani, saying, 'After the title of Mother of God, I rejoice most in that of Advocate of sinners.' Blessed Amadeus says, 'that our Queen is constantly before the Divine Majesty, interceding for us, with her most powerful prayers.' And as in heaven, 'she well knows our miseries and wants, she cannot do otherwise than compassionate us; and thus, with the affection of a mother, moved to tenderness towards us, pitying and benign, she is always endeavouring to help and save us.' And therefore does Richard of St. Lawrence encourage each one, however bad he may be, to have recourse with confidence to this sweet Advocate, being assured that he will always find her ready to help him; 'for,' says the Abbot Godfrey, 'Mary is always ready to pray for all.'

Who can ever comprehend the solicitude with which Mary constantly stands before God in our behalf! 'She is never weary of defending us,' says St. Germanus; and the remark is beautiful, meaning that so great is the compassion excited in Mary by our misery, and such is the love that she bears us, that she prays constantly, and relaxes not her efforts in our behalf; that by her prayers she may effectually defend us from evil, and obtain for

us sufficient graces. She has never done enough.

Truly unfortunate should we poor sinners be had we not this great Advocate, who is so powerful and compassionate, and at the same time, 'so prudent and wise, that the Judge, her Son,' says Richard of St. Lawrence, 'cannot condemn the guilty who are defended by her.' 'There is no doubt,' St. Bernard remarks, 'that Jesus Christ is the only mediator of justice between men and God; that, in virtue of His own merits and promises, He will and can obtain us pardon and the Divine favours; but because men acknowledge and fear the Divine Majesty, which is in Him as God, for this reason it was necessary to assign us another Advocate, to whom we might have recourse with less fear and more confidence, and this Advocate is Mary, than whom we cannot find one more powerful with His Divine Majesty, or one more merciful towards ourselves.' 'But,' continues the same Saint, 'should any one fear to go to the feet of this most sweet Advocate, who has nothing in her of severity, nothing terrible, but who is all courteous, amiable, and benign, he would indeed be offering an insult to the tender compassion of Mary.' And he adds, 'Read, and read again, as often as you please, all that is said of her in the Gospels, and if you can find any, the least trait of severity recorded of her,

then fear to approach her. But no, this you can never find, and therefore go to her with a joyful heart, and she will save you by her intercession.'

'Be comforted then, O you who fear,' will I say with St. Thomas of Villanova; 'breathe freely and take courage, O wretched sinners. This great Virgin, who is the Mother of your God and Judge, is also the Advocate of the whole human race: fit for this office, for she can do what she wills with God; most wise, for she knows all the means of appeasing Him; universal, for she welcomes all, and refuses to defend no one.'

EXAMPLE.

In the Pontifical States, a young woman who was very devout to Mary, met with a captain of bandits. Fearing some outrage, she entreated him for the love of the most Blessed Virgin not to molest her. 'Fear nothing,' he replied; 'since you have asked me in the name of the Mother of God, all that I desire is that you should recommend me to her;' and, in fact, he himself accompanied her along the road to a place of safety. On the following night Mary appeared to the bandit in a dream, and thanking him for the action he had performed for her love, assured him that she would not forget it, and would one day reward him. The

robber was afterwards made a prisoner and condemned to death. The night before the execution was to take place, behold the Blessed Virgin again appeared to him in a dream, and first of all asked him whether he knew her? He replied that it seemed to him that he had seen her before. 'I am,' she then said, 'the Blessed Virgin Mary, and am come to reward thee for what thou hast done for me. To-morrow thou wilt die, but thou wilt die with so much contrition that thou wilt go at once to paradise.' The prisoner awoke and felt such sorrow for his sins that he began to weep bitterly, at the same time thanking our Blessed Lady aloud. He then begged that a priest might be immediately called, he confessed his sins to him with many tears, related the vision he had had, and entreated him to publish the grace which he had received from Mary. He went with great joy to execution; after which it is said, that his countenance was so peaceful and happy, that all who saw him believed that the promise of the Divine Mother had been fulfilled.

PRAYER.

O great Mother of my Lord, I see full well that my ingratitude towards God and thee, and this too for so many years, has merited for me that thou shouldst justly abandon me, and

no longer have a care of me, for an ungrateful soul is no longer worthy of favours. But I, O Lady, have a high idea of thy great goodness; I believe it to be far greater than my ingratitude. Continue then, O refuge of sinners, and cease not to help a miserable sinner, who confides in thee. O Mother of Mercy, deign to extend a helping hand to a poor fallen wretch, and who asks thee for pity. O Mary, either defend me thyself, or tell me to whom I can have recourse, and who is better able to defend me than thou,—and where I can find with God a more clement and powerful advocate than thou, who art His Mother. Thou, in becoming the Mother of our Saviour, wast thereby made the fitting instrument to save sinners, and wast given me for my salvation. O Mary, save him who has recourse to thee. I deserve not thy love, but it is thine own desire to save sinners that makes me hope that thou lovest me. And if thou lovest me, how can I be lost? O my own beloved Mother, if by thee I save my soul, as I hope to do, I shall no longer be ungrateful, I shall make up for my past ingratitude, and for the love thou hast shown me, by my everlasting praises, and all the affections of my soul. Happy in Heaven, where thou reignest, and wilt reign for ever, I shall always sing thy mercies, and kiss for eternity those loving hands, which have delivered me from hell, as

often as I have deserved it by my sins. O Mary, my liberator, my hope; my Queen, my Advocate, my own sweet Mother, I love thee; I desire thy glory, and I will love thee for ever. Amen, amen. Thus do I hope.

THE TWENTY-FIRST DAY.

OF THE GREATNESS OF THE CLEMENCY AND COMPASSION OF MARY.

St. Bernard, speaking of the great compassion of Mary towards us poor creatures, says, 'that she is the land overflowing with milk and honey, promised by God.' Hence St. Leo observes, 'that the Blessed Virgin has so merciful a heart, that she deserves not only to be called merciful, but mercy itself.' St. Bonaventure also, considering that Mary was made Mother of God on account of the miserable, and that to her is committed the charge of dispensing mercy; considering, moreover, the tender care she takes of all, and that her compassion is so great, that she seems to have no other desire than that of relieving the needy; says, that when he looks at her, he seems no longer to see the justice of God, but only the Divine Mercy, of which Mary is full. In fine, the compassion of Mary is so great towards us, that the Abbot Guarric says, 'that her loving heart can never remain a moment without bringing forth its fruits of tenderness.' 'And what

exclaims St. Bernard, 'can ever flow from a source of compassion but compassion itself?' Mary is also called an olive-tree: 'As a fair olive-tree on the plains.' For, as from the olive, oil (a symbol of mercy) alone is extracted, so from the hands of Mary graces and mercy alone proceed. Hence the venerable Father Louis de Ponte says, 'that Mary may properly be called the Mother of Oil, since she is the Mother of Mercy.' And thus, when we go to this good Mother for the oil of her mercy, we cannot fear that she will deny it to us, as the wise virgins in the Gospel did to the foolish ones: 'Lest perhaps there be not enough for us and for you.' O no! for she is indeed rich in this oil of mercy, as St. Bonaventure assures us, 'Mary is filled with the oil of compassion.' She is called by the Church, not only a prudent Virgin, but most prudent, that we may understand, says Hugo of St. Victor, that she is so full of grace and compassion, that she can supply all, without losing any herself: 'Thou, O Blessed Virgin, art full of grace, and indeed so full, that the whole world may draw of this overflowing oil.' 'For if the prudent Virgins provided oil in vessels, with their lamps, thou, O most prudent Virgin, hast borne an overflowing and inexhaustible vessel, from which, the oil of mercy streaming, thou replenishest the lamps of all.'

But why, I ask, is this beautiful olive-tree said to stand in the midst of the plains; and not rather in the midst of a garden, surrounded by a wall and hedges? The same Hugo of St. Victor tells us, that it is 'that all may see her, that all may go to her for refuge'—That all may see her easily, and as easily have recourse to her, to obtain remedies for all their ills. This beautiful explanation is confirmed by St. Antoninus, who says, 'that all can go to, and gather the fruit of an olive-tree, that is exposed in the midst of a plain, and thus all, both just and sinners, can have recourse to Mary, to obtain her mercy.' He then adds, 'O how many sentences of condemnation has not this most Blessed Virgin revoked by her compassionate prayers, in favour of sinners who have had recourse to her!' 'And what safer refuge,' says the devout Thomas à Kempis, 'can we ever find than the compassionate heart of Mary? there the poor find a home, the infirm a remedy, the afflicted relief, the doubtful counsel, and the abandoned succour.'

Wretched, indeed, should we be, had we not this Mother of Mercy always attentive and solicitous to relieve us in our wants! 'Where there is no woman, he mourneth that is in want,' says the Holy Ghost. 'This woman,' says St. John Damascen, 'is precisely the most Blessed Virgin Mary; and wherever this most

holy woman is not, the sick man groans.' And surely it cannot be otherwise, since all graces are dispensed at the prayer of Mary, and where this is wanting, there can be no hope of mercy, as our Lord gave St. Bridget to understand in these words: 'Unless the prayers of Mary interposed, there could be no hope of mercy.'

But perhaps we fear that Mary does not see, or does not feel for, our necessities? O no, she sees and feels them far better than we do ourselves.

'This Queen,' says St. Bernard, 'is so compassionate and benign, that when a sinner, whoever he may be, recommends himself to her charity, she does not question his merits, or whether he is worthy or unworthy to be attended to, but she hears and succours all.' 'O how many,' exclaims the Abbot of Celles, 'who deserved to be condemned by the justice of the Son, are saved by the mercy of the Mother! for she is God's treasure, and the treasurer of all graces; and thus our salvation is in her hands, and depends on her.' Let us then always have recourse to this compassionate Mother, and confidently hope for salvation through her intercession; for she, according to the encouraging assurance of Bernardine de Bustis, 'is our salvation, our life, our hope, our counsel, our refuge, our help.'

Let us conclude with the beautiful and tender

exclamation of St. Bonaventure on these words, 'O clement, O pious, O sweet Virgin Mary!' 'O Mary, thou art clement with the miserable, compassionate towards those who pray to thee, sweet towards those who love thee: clement with the penitent, compassionate to those who advance, sweet to the perfect. Thou showest thyself clement in delivering us from chastisement, compassionate in bestowing graces, and sweet in giving thyself to those who seek thee.'

EXAMPLE.

Father Charles Bovio relates, that in the principality of Dombes in France, there was a married man whose wife was jealous of another woman, and did nothing but call down, both on her husband and the woman, the judgments of God; and this she did especially one day that she went before an altar of the Blessed Virgin to pray for justice against this woman. The woman, however, was in the habit of going every day to recite a 'Hail Mary' before the same image. One night, the Divine Mother appeared in a dream to the wife, who, on seeing her, began as usual to exclaim, 'Justice, O Mother of God, justice!' But our Blessed Lady replied, 'Justice! chastisements! dost thou seek them of me? No, go to others, for I will not grant what thou askest; for know,'

she added, 'that that sinner recites every day a salutation in my honour, and by whomsoever it is recited, it deprives me of the power of allowing him to suffer or to be chastised for his sins.' In the morning the wife went to hear mass in the above-named church of our Blessed Lady, and on returning home met this woman, and immediately began to abuse her, and then declared that she was a witch, and that she had succeeded even in enchanting the Blessed Virgin herself. The people who were present told her to hold her tongue. 'Be silent! indeed, I will not, for what I say is true; for last night our Blessed Lady appeared to me, and when I demanded justice, she told me that she could not grant it on account of a salutation offered her every day by this wretch.' The woman was then asked what salutation it was that she offered every day to the Mother of God, and she replied that it was the 'Hail Mary.' On hearing that for that trifling devotion the Blessed Virgin had shown her such mercy, she went and cast herself before the holy image, and there, in the presence of all, she asked pardon for the scandal she had given, and made a vow of perpetual chastity. She then clothed herself with the habit of a nun, built herself a little room near the church, and there remained until her death, leading a life of continual mortification and penance.

PRAYER.

O Mother of Mercy, since thou art so compassionate, and hast so great a desire to render service to us poor creatures, and to grant our requests, behold I, the most miserable of all men, have now recourse to thy compassion, in order that thou mayest grant me that which I ask. Others may ask what they please of thee,—bodily health, and earthly goods and advantages; but I come, O Lady, to ask thee for that which thou desirest of me, and which is most in conformity with, and agreeable to thy most sacred heart. Thou art so humble; obtain for me humility and love of contempt. Thou wast so patient under the sufferings of this life, obtain for me patience in trials. Thou wast all filled with the love of God, obtain for me the gift of His pure and holy love. Thou wast all love towards thy neighbour; obtain for me charity towards all, and particularly towards those who are in any way my enemies. Thou wast entirely united to the Divine will; obtain for me entire conformity with the will of God in whatever way He may be pleased to dispose of me. Thou, in fine, art the most holy of all creatures; O Mary, make me a saint. Love for me is not wanting on thy part; thou canst do all, and thou hast the will to obtain me all. The only thing, then, that can prevent me from

receiving thy graces is, either neglect on my part in having recourse to thee, or little confidence in thy intercession; but these two things thou must obtain for me. These two greatest graces I ask from thee; from thee I must obtain them; from thee I hope for them with the greatest confidence, O Mary, my Mother Mary, my hope, my love, my life, my refuge, my help, and my consolation. Amen.

THE TWENTY-SECOND DAY.

MARY IS ALL EYES TO PITY AND SUCCOUR US IN OUR NECESSITIES.

St. Epiphanius calls the Divine Mother many-eyed, indicating, thereby, her vigilance in assisting us poor creatures in this world. A possessed person was once being exorcised, and was questioned, by the exorcist, as to what Mary did. The devil replied, 'She descends and ascends.' And he meant, that this benign Lady is constantly descending from Heaven to bring graces to men, and re-ascending to obtain the Divine favour on our prayers. With reason, then, used St. Andrew Avellino to call the Blessed Virgin the 'Heavenly Commissioner,' for she is continually carrying messages of mercy, and obtaining graces for all, for just and sinners. God fixes His eyes on the just, says the Royal Prophet: 'The eyes of the Lord are on the just.' 'But the eyes of the Lady,' says Richard of St. Lawrence, 'are on the just, and on sinners.' 'For,' he adds, 'the eyes of Mary are the eyes of a mother, and a mother not only watches her child, to prevent its falling, but, when it has fallen, she picks it up.'

It was revealed to St. Gertrude, that when these words are addressed with devotion to the

most Blessed Virgin, 'Turn then, O most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us,' Mary cannot do otherwise than yield to the demand of whoever thus invokes her. 'Ah truly, O great Lady,' says St. Bernard, 'does the immensity of thy mercy fill the whole earth.' 'And, therefore,' says St. Bonaventure, 'this loving Mother has so earnest a desire to do good to all, that not only is she offended by those who positively outrage her (as some are wicked enough to do), but she is offended at those who do not ask her for favours or graces.' So that St. Idelbert addresses her, saying: 'Thou, O Lady, teachest us to hope for far greater graces than we deserve, since thou never ceasest to dispense graces far, far beyond our merits.'

One day, when St. Gertrude was addressing the above words, 'Turn thine eyes of mercy towards us,' to the Divine Mother, she saw the Blessed Virgin pointing to the eyes of her Son, whom she held in her arms, and then said, 'These are the most compassionate eyes that I can turn for salvation towards all those who call upon me.' A sinner was once weeping before an image of Mary, imploring her to obtain pardon for him from God, when he perceived that the Blessed Virgin turned towards the Child that she held in her arms, and said, 'My Son, shall these tears be lost?' And he

understood that Jesus Christ had already pardoned him.

How then is it possible that any one can perish who recommends himself to this good Mother, since her Son, as God, has promised her that for her love He will show as much mercy as she pleases to all who recommend themselves to her? This our Lord revealed to St. Gertrude, allowing her to hear Him make the promise to His Mother in the following words: 'In My omnipotence, O revered Mother, I have granted thee the reconciliation of all sinners who devoutly invoke the aid of thy compassion, in whatever way it may please thee.' On this assurance the Abbot Adam Persenius, considering the great power of Mary with God, and, at the same time, her great compassion for us, full of confidence, says, 'O Mother of mercy, thy tender compassion is as great as thy power, and thou art as compassionate in forgiving as thou art powerful in obtaining all.' 'And when,' he asks, 'did the case ever occur in which thou, who art the Mother of mercy, didst not show compassion? O, when was it that thou, who art the Mother of omnipotence, couldst not aid? Ah, yes, with the same facility with which thou seest our misfortunes thou obtainest for us whatever thou willest.' 'Satiate, O satiate thyself, great Queen,' says the Abbot Guarric,

'with the glory of thy Son, and out of compassion, though not for any merit of ours, be pleased to send us, thy servants and children here below, the crumbs that fall from thy table.'

Should the sight of our sins ever discourage us, let us address the Mother of mercy in the words of William of Pâris: 'O Lady, do not set up my sins against me, for I oppose thy compassion to them. Let it never be said that my sins could contend in judgment against thy mercy, which is far more powerful to obtain me pardon than my sins are to obtain my condemnation.'

'Who can there be in the world,' exclaims St. Bonaventure, 'who refuses to love this most amiable Queen? She is more beautiful than the sun, and sweeter than honey. She is a treasure of goodness, amiable and courteous to all.' 'I salute thee then,' continues the enraptured Saint, 'O my Lady and Mother, nay, even my heart, my soul. Forgive me, O Mary, if I say that I love thee, for if I am not worthy to love thee, at least thou art all worthy to be loved by me.'

EXAMPLE.

In Naples there was a Moor, a slave of Don Octavius del Monaco, who, notwithstanding all the exhortations which were made him to

renounce Mahometanism, remained obstinate, but yet he never failed to light every evening, at his own expense, a lamp before an image of Mary, which was in the house. He used also to say, 'I hope that this Lady will do me some great favour.' One night the Blessed Virgin appeared to him, and told him to become a Christian. The Turk even then resisted, but Mary, putting her hand on his shoulder, said, 'Resist no longer, Abel, be baptised, and take the name of Joseph.' On the very next morning, he went to be instructed, and, with eleven other Turks, was baptised, on the tenth of August, in the year 1648. It must be here remarked, that when the Divine Mother appeared to him, and had converted him, she was about to depart; but the Moor took her by the mantle, saying: 'Lady, when I am in affliction, I beseech thee to let me see thee.' She promised him that it should be so; and in fact, on an occasion when he was afflicted, he called her, and Mary again appeared, and by saying, 'Have patience,' filled him with consolation.

PRAYER.

O greatest and most sublime of all creatures, most sacred Virgin, I salute thee from this earth,—I, a miserable and unfortunate rebel against my God, who deserve chastisements,

not favours; justice, and not mercy. O Lady, I say not this because I doubt thy compassion. I know that the greater thou art the more thou dost glory in being benign. I know that thou rejoicest that thou art so rich, because thou art thus enabled to succour us poor miserable creatures. I know that the greater is the poverty of those who have recourse to thee, the more dost thou exert thyself to protect and save them. O, my Mother, it was thou who didst one day weep over thy Son who died for me. Offer, I beseech thee, thy tears to God, and by these obtain for me true sorrow for my sins. Sinners then afflicted thee so much, and I, by my crimes, have done the same. Obtain for me, O Mary, that at least from this day forward I may not continue to afflict thee and thy Son by my ingratitude. What would thy sorrow avail me if I continue to be ungrateful to thee? To what purpose would thy mercy have been shown me, if again I was unfaithful and lost? No, my Queen, permit it not, thou hast supplied for all my short-comings. Thou obtainest from God what thou wilt. Thou grantest the prayers of all. I ask of thee two graces; I expect them from thee, and will not be satisfied with less. Obtain for me that I may be faithful to God, and no more offend Him, and love Him during the remainder of my life as much as I have offended Him.

THE TWENTY-THIRD DAY.

MARY IS THE PEACEMAKER BETWEEN SINNERS AND GOD.

THE grace of God is the greatest and the most desirable of treasures for every soul. It is called by the Holy Ghost an infinite treasure; for by the means of Divine grace we are raised to the honour of being the friends of God. These are the words of the Book of Wisdom: 'For she is an infinite treasure to men: which they that use become the friends of God.' And hence Jesus, our Redeemer and God, did not hesitate to call those His friends who were in grace: 'You are My friends.' O accursed sin, that dissolves this friendship! 'But your iniquities,' says the Prophet Isaias, 'have divided between you and your God.' And putting hatred between the soul and God, it is changed from a friend into an enemy of its Lord, as expressed in the Book of Wisdom: 'But to God the wicked and his wickedness are hateful alike.' What, then, must a sinner do who has the misfortune to be the enemy of God? He must find a mediator who will obtain pardon for him, and who will enable him to re-

cover the lost friendship of God. 'Mary,' says Cardinal Hugo, 'is the great peacemaker, who finds and obtains the reconciliation of enemies with God, salvation for those who are lost, pardon for sinners, and mercy for those who are in despair.' And therefore was she called by the Divine Bridegroom, 'beautiful as the curtains of Solomon.' In the tents of David, questions of war alone were treated, but in those of Solomon, questions of peace only were entertained; and thus does the Holy Spirit give us to understand that this Mother of Mercy never treats of war and vengeance against sinners, but only of peace and forgiveness for them.

Mary was prefigured by the dove which returned to Noah in the ark with an olive branch in its beak, as a pledge of the peace which God granted to men. And on this idea St. Bonaventure thus addresses our Blessed Lady: 'Thou art that most faithful dove; thou wast a sure mediatress between God and the world, lost in a spiritual deluge;' thou, by presenting thyself before God, hast obtained for a lost world peace and salvation. Mary, then, was the heavenly dove which brought to a lost world the olive branch, the sign of mercy, since she in the first place gave us Jesus Christ, who is the source of mercy, and then, by His merits, obtained all graces for us. 'And as by

Mary,' says St. Epiphanius, 'heavenly peace was once for all given to the world, so by her are sinners still reconciled to God.' Wherefore blessed Albert the Great makes her say: 'I am that dove of Noah, which brought the olive-branch of universal peace to the Church.'

Again, the rainbow seen by St. John, which encircled the throne of God, was an express figure of Mary: 'And there was a rainbow round about the throne.' It is thus explained by Cardinal Vitalis: 'The rainbow round the throne is Mary, who softens the judgment and sentence of God against sinners;' meaning, that she is always before God's tribunal, mitigating the chastisements due to sinners. St. Bernardine of Sienna says, 'that it was of this rainbow that God spoke when He promised Noah that He would place it in the clouds as a sign of peace, that on looking at it He might remember the eternal peace which He had covenanted to man. "I will set My bow in the clouds, and it shall be the sign of a covenant between Me and between the earth, . . . and I shall see it, and shall remember the everlasting covenant." Mary,' says the Saint, 'is this bow of eternal peace:' 'for, as God on seeing it remembers the peace promised to the earth, so does He, at the prayers of Mary, forgive the crimes of sinners, and confirm His peace with them.'

St. Andrew of Crete calls Mary 'a pledge, a security for our reconciliation with God;' that is, that God goes about seeking for reconciliation with sinners by pardoning them; and that they may not doubt of their forgiveness, He has given them Mary as a pledge of it, and therefore the Saint exclaims, 'Hail, O peace of God with men.' Wherefore St. Bonaventure encourages a sinner, saying: 'If thou fearest that on account of thy faults God in His anger will be avenged, what hast thou to do? Go, have recourse to Mary, who is the hope of sinners; and, if thou fearest that she may refuse to take thy part, know that she cannot do so, for God Himself has imposed on her the duty of succouring the miserable.'

St. John Chrysostom says, 'that another purpose for which the Blessed Virgin Mary was made the Mother of God was, that she might obtain salvation for many, who, on account of their wicked lives, could not be saved according to the rigour of Divine justice, but might be so with the help of her sweet mercy and powerful intercession.' This is confirmed by St. Anselm, who says, 'that Mary was raised to the dignity of Mother of God rather for sinners than for the just, since Jesus Christ declares, that He came to call not the just but sinners.' For this reason, the holy Church sings, 'Thou dost not abhor sinner

without whom thou wouldst never have been worthy of such a Son.' For the same reason William of Paris, invoking her, says: 'O Mary, thou art obliged to help sinners for all the gifts, the graces, and high honours, which are comprised in the dignity of Mother of God, that thou hast received; thou owest all, so to say, to sinners, for on their account thou wast made worthy to have a God for thy Son.' 'If then Mary,' concludes St. Anselm, 'was made Mother of God on account of sinners, how can I, however great my sins may be, despair of pardon?'

EXAMPLE.

Alan de la Roche and Boniface relate, that in Florence there was a young woman of the name of Benedicta, who was leading a most wicked and scandalous life. Fortunately for her, as it turned out, St. Dominic went to preach in that city, and she, out of mere curiosity, went one day to hear him. God, during that sermon, touched her heart, so much so that she went, and weeping bitterly, confessed to the Saint. St. Dominic thereupon absolved her, and desired her to say the Rosary for her penance. From evil habits, the unfortunate creature again fell into her former mode of life. The Saint heard of it, sought her out, and again induced her to confess. God, in order to

make her persevere, one day showed her hell, and pointed out some who were there on her account. He then opened a book, and in it made her read the frightful catalogue of her sins. The sinner was horrified at such a sight, and full of confidence, begged that Mary would assist her, and she understood that this good Mother had already obtained from God time for her to weep over so many crimes. After the vision Benedicta led a good life; but always seeing before her eyes that terrible catalogue, she one day began to implore her comfortress in the following terms: 'My Mother,' said she, 'it is true that for my crimes I ought now to be in the lowest abyss of hell, but since thou, by obtaining me time to repent, hast delivered me from it, I ask thee this one favour more, O most compassionate Lady, that my sins may be cancelled from the book, and I will never cease all the same to weep for them.' At this prayer Mary appeared to her, and told her that to obtain what she desired she must always remember her sins and the mercy that God had shown her, and besides, that she should often recall to her mind the sufferings which her Divine Son had endured for her love, and consider how many were lost for less sins than she had committed; and, at the same time, revealed to her, that on that day, a child only eight years of age would go to hell for one mortal sin.

Benedicta obeyed our Blessed Lady faithfully, and, behold, one day Jesus Christ appeared to her, and showing her the book, said, 'See, the book is blank, thy sins are cancelled, now write acts of love and virtue in their stead.' Doing this, Benedicta led a holy life, and died the death of a Saint.

PRAYER.

O my most sweet Lady, since thy office is, as William of Paris says, that of a mediatress between God and sinners, I will address thee in the words of St. Thomas of Villanova: 'Fulfil thy office in my behalf, O tender Advocate, do thy work.' Say not that my cause is too difficult to gain, for I know, and all tell me so, that every cause, no matter how desperate, if undertaken by thee, is never, and never will be, lost. And will mine be lost? Ah, no, this I cannot fear. The only thing that I might fear is that, on seeing the multitude of my sins, thou mightest not undertake my defence. But on seeing thy immense mercy, and the very great desire of thy most sweet heart to help the most abandoned sinners, even this I cannot fear. And who was ever lost that had recourse to thee? Therefore, I invoke thy aid, O my great Advocate, my refuge, my hope, my Mother, Mary. To thy hands do I intrust the cause of my eternal salvation. To thee do I

commit my soul; it was lost, but thou hast to save it. I will always thank our Lord for having given me this great confidence in thee; and which, notwithstanding my unworthiness, I feel is an assurance of salvation. I have but one fear to afflict me, O beloved Queen, and that is, that I may one day, by my own negligence, lose this confidence in thee. And therefore I implore thee, O Mary, by the love thou bearest to Jesus, thyself to preserve and increase in me, more and more, this sweet confidence in thy intercession, by which I hope most certainly to recover the Divine friendship, that I have hitherto so madly despised and lost; and having recovered it, I hope, through thee, to preserve it; and preserving it by the same means, I hope at length to thank thee for it in heaven, and there to sing God's mercies and thine for all eternity. Amen. This is my hope; thus may it be, thus it will be.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.

MARY IS OUR LIFE, BECAUSE SHE OBTAINS US THE PARDON OF OUR SINS.

If we have had the misfortune to lose the grace of God, we should seek to recover it, but we should do so by Mary, for though we may have lost it, she has found it; and hence St. Bernard calls her 'the finder of grace.' The angel Gabriel expressly declared this for our consolation, when he saluted the Blessed Virgin, saying, 'Fear not, Mary; thou hast found grace.' But if Mary had never been deprived of grace, how could the archangel say that she had then found it? A thing may be found by a person who did not previously possess it; but we are told by the same archangel, that the Blessed Virgin was always with God, always in grace, nay, full of grace: 'Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.' Since Mary then did not find grace for herself, she being always full of it, for whom did she find it? Cardinal Hugo, in his commentary on the above text, replies that she found it for sinners who had lost it. 'Let sinners then,' says this devout writer, 'who by their crimes have lost grace, address

themselves to the Blessed Virgin; for with her they will surely find it; let them humbly salute her, and say with confidence, Lady, that which has been found must be restored to him who has lost it; restore us, therefore, our property which thou hast found.' On this subject, Richard of St. Lawrence concludes, 'That if we hope to recover the grace of God, we must go to Mary, who has found it, and finds it always.' And as she always was and always will be dear to God, if we have recourse to her, we shall certainly succeed. Again Mary says, in the eighth chapter of the sacred Canticles, that God has placed her in the world to be our defence: 'I am a wall, and my breasts are as a tower.' And she is truly made a mediatress of peace between sinners and God, 'Since I am become in His presence as one finding peace.' On these words St. Bernard encourages sinners, saying, 'Go to this Mother of Mercy, and show her the wounds which thy sins have left on thy soul; then will she certainly entreat her Son, by the breasts that gave Him suck, to pardon thee all. And this Divine Son, who loves her so tenderly, will most certainly grant her petition.' In this sense it is that the holy Church, in her almost daily prayer, calls upon us to beg our Lord to grant us the powerful help of the intercession of Mary to rise from our sins: 'Grant thy help to our weakness, O

most merciful God; and that we, who are mindful of the holy Mother of God, may by the help of her intercession rise from our iniquities.' With reason then does St. Lawrence Justinian call her 'the hope of malefactors;' since she alone is the one who obtains them pardon from God. With reason does St. Bernard call her 'the sinners' ladder;' since she, the most compassionate Queen, extending her hand to them, draws them from an abyss of sin, and enables them to ascend to God. With reason does an ancient writer call her 'the only hope of sinners;' for by her help alone can we hope for the remission of our sins. St. John Chrysostom also says 'that sinners receive pardon by the intercession of Mary alone.' And therefore the Saint, in the name of all sinners, thus addresses her: 'Hail, Mother' of God and of us all, 'heaven,' where God dwells, 'throne,' from which our Lord dispenses all graces, 'fair daughter, Virgin, honour, glory, and firmament of our Church, assiduously pray to Jesus that in the day of judgment we may find mercy through thee, and receive the reward prepared by God for those who love Him.'

St. Andrew of Crete calls Mary the pledge of Divine mercy; meaning that, when sinners have recourse to Mary that they may be reconciled with God, He assures them of pardon, and gives them a pledge of it; and this

pledge is Mary, whom He has bestowed upon us for our advocate, and by whose intercession, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, God forgives all who have recourse to her. St. Bridget heard an angel say that the holy prophets rejoiced in knowing that God, by the humility and purity of Mary, was to be reconciled with sinners, and to receive those who had offended Him to favour: 'They exulted, foreknowing that our Lord Himself would be appeased by thy humility and the purity of thy life, O Mary, thou super-effulgent star, and that He would be reconciled with those who had provoked His wrath.'

No sinner having recourse to the compassion of Mary should fear being rejected; for she is the Mother of Mercy, and as such desires to save the most miserable. 'Mary is that happy ark,' says St. Bernard, 'in which those who take refuge will never suffer the shipwreck of eternal perdition.' At the time of the Deluge, even brutes were saved in Noah's ark. Under the mantle of Mary even sinners obtain salvation. St. Gertrude once saw Mary with her mantle extended, and under it many wild beasts—lions, bears, and tigers—had taken refuge; and she remarked that Mary not only did not reject, but even welcomed and caressed them with the greatest tenderness. The Saint understood hereby that

the most abandoned sinners who have recourse to Mary are not only not rejected, but that they are welcomed and saved by her from eternal death. Let us then enter this ark, let us take refuge under the mantle of Mary, and she most certainly will not reject us, but will secure our salvation.

EXAMPLE.

Father Bovio relates that there was a wicked woman named Ellen, who entered a church, and by chance heard a sermon on the Rosary. On leaving the church she purchased a set of beads, but wore them concealed, as she did not wish it to be known that she had them. She began to recite them; and though she did so without devotion, our most Blessed Lady poured such sweetness and consolation into her soul during the whole time, that she could not cease repeating the 'Hail Marys.' At length she was filled with such a horror for her wicked life, that she no longer could find repose, and was obliged to go to confession; and she accomplished this duty with such contrition, that the priest was filled with astonishment. After her confession, she went to the foot of an altar of the most Blessed Virgin, and there, as a thanksgiving to her advocate, said the Rosary. The Divine Mo-

ther then addressed her from the image in the following words: 'Ellen, thou hast already offended God and me too much. From this moment change thy life, and I will bestow a large share of my graces upon thee.' The poor sinner, in the deepest confusion, replied: 'Ah, most Holy Virgin, it is true that hitherto I have been a wicked sinner; but thou canst do all—help me. On my part, I abandon myself to thee, and will spend the whole remainder of my life in doing penance for my sins.' With the assistance of Mary, she distributed all her goods to the poor, and began a life of rigorous mortification. She was tormented with dreadful temptations; but constantly recommended herself to the Mother of God, and thus was always victorious. She was favoured with many extraordinary graces, with visions, revelations, and even the gift of prophecy. Finally, before her death, which was announced to her by Mary some days before it took place, the most Blessed Virgin came herself, with her Divine Son, to visit her; and when she expired, her soul was seen flying towards Heaven in the form of a beautiful dove.

PRAYER.

Behold, O Mother of my God, my only hope, Mary, behold at thy feet a miserable

sinner, who asks thee for mercy. Thou art proclaimed and called by the whole Church, and by all the faithful, the refuge of sinners. Thou art consequently my refuge; thou hast to save me. Thou knowest, most sweet Mother of God, how much thy blessed Son desires our salvation; thou knowest all that Jesus Christ endured for this end. I present thee, O my Mother, the sufferings of Jesus: the cold He endured in the stable, His journey into Egypt, His toils, His sweat, the blood He shed; the anguish which caused His death on the cross, and of which thou wast thyself a witness. O, show that thou lovest thy beloved Son; and by this love I implore thee to assist me. Extend thy hand to a poor creature who has fallen, and asks thy help. Were I a Saint, I need not seek thy mercy; but because I am a sinner I fly to thee, who art the Mother of Mercies. I know that thy compassionate heart finds its consolation in assisting the miserable when thou canst do so, and dost not find them obstinate. Console, then, thy compassionate heart, and console me this day; for now thou hast the opportunity of saving a poor creature condemned to hell; and thou canst do so; for I will not be obstinate. I abandon myself into thy hands. Only tell me what thou wouldst have me to do, and obtain me strength to execute

it; for I am resolved to do all that depends on me to recover the Divine grace. I take refuge under thy mantle. Jesus wills that I should have recourse to thee, in order not only that His blood may save me, but also that thy prayers may assist me in this great work, for thy glory and for His own, since thou art His Mother. He sends me to thee that thou mayest help me. O Mary, see, I have recourse to thee; in thee do I confide. Thou prayest for so many others, pray also for me; say only a word. Tell our Lord that thou willest my salvation, and God will certainly save me. Say that I am thine, and then I have obtained all that I ask—all that I desire.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.

MARY IS ALSO OUR LIFE, BECAUSE SHE OBTAINS US PERSEVERANCE.

FINAL perseverance is so great a gift of God, that, as it was declared by the Holy Council of Trent, it is quite gratuitous on His part, and we cannot *merit* it. Yet we are told by St. Augustine, that all who seek for it obtain it from God; and, according to Father Suarez, they obtain it infallibly, if only they are diligent in asking for it to the end of their lives; for, as Bellarmin well remarks, 'That which is daily required must be asked for every day.' Now, if it is true that all the graces that God dispenses to men pass by the hands of Mary, it will be equally true that it is only through Mary that we can hope for this greatest of all graces—perseverance. And we shall obtain it most certainly, if we always seek it with confidence through Mary. This grace she herself promises to all who serve her faithfully during life, in the following words of Ecclesiasticus, and which are applied to her by the Church, on the Feast of her Immaculate Conception: 'They that work by me shall not sin. They that explain me shall have life everlasting.'

In order that we may be preserved in the life of grace, we require spiritual fortitude, to

resist the many enemies of our salvation. Now this fortitude can be obtained only by the means of Mary, and we are assured of it in the book of Proverbs, for the Church applies the passage to this most Blessed Virgin: 'Strength is mine; by me kings reign.' Meaning, by the words, 'strength is mine,' that God has bestowed this precious gift on Mary, in order that she may dispense it to her faithful clients. And by the words, 'By me kings reign,' she signifies that by her means her servants reign over and command their senses and passions, and thus become worthy to reign eternally in heaven. O, what strength do the servants of this great Lady possess, to overcome all the assaults of hell! Mary is that tower spoken of in the sacred Canticles: 'Thy neck is as the tower of David, which is built with bulwarks; a thousand bucklers hang upon it, all the armour of valiant men.' She is as a well-defended fortress in defence of her lovers, who in their wars have recourse to her. In her do her clients find all shields and arms, to defend themselves against hell. Truly are those souls to be pitied who abandon this defence, in ceasing their devotion to Mary, and no longer recommending themselves to her in the time of danger! If the sun ceased to rise, says St. Bernard, how could the world become other than a chaos of darkness and horror? And ap-

plying his question to Mary, he repeats it: 'Take away the sun, and where will be the day? Take away Mary, and what will be left but the darkest night?' When a soul loses devotion to Mary it is immediately enveloped in darkness, and in that darkness of which the Holy Ghost speaks in the Psalms: 'Thou hast appointed darkness, and it is night; in it shall all the beasts of the woods go about.' When the light of heaven ceases to shine in a soul, all is darkness, and it becomes the haunt of devils and of every sin. St. Anselm says, that 'if any one is disregarded and contemned by Mary, he is necessarily lost;' and therefore we may with reason exclaim, Woe to those who are in opposition with this sun! Woe to those who despise its light! that is to say, all who despise devotion to Mary. St. Francis Borgia always doubted the perseverance of those in whom he did not find particular devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

It was then not without reason that St. Germanus called the most Blessed Virgin the breath of Christians; for as the body cannot live without breathing, so the soul cannot live without having recourse to and recommending itself to Mary, by whose means we certainly acquire and preserve the life of Divine grace within our souls.

On the other hand, Mary says in the follow-

ing words of the Book of Proverbs, which are applied to her by the Church: 'Blessed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates, and waiteth at the posts of my doors,'—as if she would say, Blessed is he that hears my voice, and is constantly attentive to apply at the door of my mercy, and seeks light and help from me. For clients who do this, Mary does her part, and obtains them the light and strength they require to abandon sin and walk in the paths of virtue. For this reason Innocent III. beautifully calls her 'the moon at night, the dawn at break of day, and the sun at mid-day.' She is a moon to enlighten those who blindly wander in the night of sin, and makes them see and understand the miserable state of damnation in which they are; she is the dawn (that is, the forerunner of the sun) to those whom she has already enlightened, and makes them abandon sin and return to God, the true Sun of justice; finally, she is a sun to those who are in a state of grace, and prevents them from again falling into the precipice of sin. And therefore St. Philip Neri, in his exhortations to his penitents, used always to say: 'My children, if you desire perseverance, be devout to our Blessed Lady.' The Blessed John Berchmans, of the Society of Jesus, used also to say: 'Whoever loves Mary will have perseverance.' Truly beautiful is

the reflection of the Abbot Rupert on this subject in his commentary on the parable of the prodigal son. He says, 'That if this dissolute youth had had a mother living, he would never have abandoned the paternal roof, or, at least, would have returned much sooner than he did;' meaning, thereby, that a son of Mary either never abandons God, or, if he has this misfortune, by her help he soon returns. O, did all men but love this most benign and loving Lady, had they but recourse to her always, and without delay, in their temptations, who would fall? Who would ever be lost? He falls and is lost who has not recourse to Mary. We, says St. Thomas of Villanova, need only when tempted by the devil, imitate little chickens, which, as soon as they perceive the approach of a bird of prey, run under the wings of their mother for protection. This is exactly what we should do whenever we are assaulted by temptation; we should not stay to reason with it, but immediately fly and place ourselves under the mantle of Mary. I will, however, quote the Saint's own words addressed to Mary: 'As chickens, when they see a kite soaring above, run and find refuge under the wings of the hen, so are we preserved under the shadow of thy wings.' 'And thou,' he continues, 'who art our Lady and Mother, hast to defend us; for, after God, we have no other refuge than thee, who art our

only hope and our protectress; towards thee we all turn our eyes with confidence.'

EXAMPLE.

The history of St. Mary of Egypt, in the first book of the lives of the Fathers, is well known. At the age of twelve years she fled from the house of her parents, and went to Alexandria, and there led an infamous life, and was a scandal to the whole city. After living for sixteen years in sin, she took it into her head to go to Jerusalem. At the time the Feast of the Holy Cross was being celebrated, and, moved rather by curiosity than by devotion, she determined on entering the church; but when at the door, she felt herself repelled by an invisible force. She made a second attempt, and was again unable to enter; and the same thing was repeated a third and fourth time. Finding her efforts in vain, the unfortunate creature withdrew to a corner of the porch, and there, enlightened from above, understood that it was on account of her infamous life that God had repelled her even from the church. In that moment she fortunately raised her eyes and beheld a picture of Mary. No sooner did she perceive it, than, sobbing, she exclaimed, 'O Mother of God, pity a poor sinner! I know

that on account of my sins I deserve not that thou shouldst cast thine eyes upon me. But thou art the refuge of sinners; for the love of thy Son Jesus, help me. Permit me to enter the church, and I promise to change my life, and to go and do penance in whatever place thou pointest out to me.' She immediately heard an internal voice, as it were that of the Blessed Virgin, replying: 'Since thou hast recourse to me, and wishest to change thy life, go—enter the church, it is no longer closed against thee.' The sinner entered, adored the Cross, and wept bitterly. She then returned to the picture, and said, 'Lady, behold I am ready, where wilt thou that I should go to do penance?' 'Go,' the Blessed Virgin replied, 'cross the Jordan, and thou wilt find the place of thy repose.' She went to confession and communion, and then passed the river, and finding herself in the desert, she understood that it was in that place she should do penance for her sinful life. During the first seventeen years the assaults of the devil, by which he endeavoured to make the Saint again fall into sin, were terrible. And what were her means of defence? She constantly recommended herself to Mary, and this most Blessed Virgin obtained her strength to resist during the whole of the above time, after which her

combats ceased. After fifty-seven years spent in the desert, and having attained the age of eighty-seven, she was, by a disposition of providence, met by the Abbot Zosimus; to him she related the history of her life, and entreated him to return the following year, and to bring her the holy communion. The saintly Abbot did so, and gave her the bread of angels. She then requested that he would again return to see her. This also he did, but found her dead. Her body was encompassed by a bright light, and at her head these words were written, 'Bury my body here—it is that of a poor sinner, and intercede with God for me.' A lion came and made a grave with his claws. St. Zosimus buried her, returned to his monastery, and related the wonders of God's mercy towards this happy sinner.

PRAYER.

O compassionate Mother, most Sacred Virgin, behold at thy feet the traitor, who, by paying with ingratitude the graces received from God through thy means, has betrayed both thee and Him. But I must tell thee, O most blessed Lady, that my misery, far from taking away my confidence, increases it; for I see that thy compassion is great, in proportion to the greatness of my misery. Show

thyself, O Mary, full of liberality towards me; for thus thou art towards all who invoke thy aid. All that I ask is that thou shouldst cast thine eyes of compassion on me, and pity me. If thy heart is thus far moved, it cannot do otherwise than protect me; and if thou protectest me, what can I fear? No, I fear nothing. I do not fear my sins, for thou canst provide a remedy; I do not fear devils, for thou art more powerful than the whole of hell; I do not even fear thy Son, though justly irritated against me; for at a word of thine He will be appeased. I only fear lest, in my temptations, and by my own fault, I may cease to recommend myself to thee, and thus be lost. But I now promise thee that I will always have recourse to thee; O help me to fulfil my promise. Lose not the opportunity which now presents itself of gratifying thy ardent desire to succour such poor wretches as myself. In thee, O Mother of God, I have unbounded confidence. From thee I hope for grace to bewail my sins as I ought, and from thee I hope for strength never again to fall into them. If I am sick, thou, O heavenly physician, canst heal me. If my sins have weakened me, thy help will strengthen me. O Mary, I hope all from thee; for thou art all-powerful with God. Amen.

THE TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.

OF THE SWEETNESS OF THE NAME OF MARY DURING LIFE.

THE great name of Mary, which was given to the Divine Mother, did not come to her from her parents, nor was it given to her by the mind or will of man, as is the case with all other names that are imposed in this world; but it came from heaven, and was given her by a Divine ordinance. This is attested by St. Jerome, St. Epiphanius, St. Antoninus, and others. 'The name of Mary came from the treasury of the Divinity,' says St. Peter Damian. Ah! yes, O Mary, it was from that treasury that thy high and admirable name came forth; for the most Blessed Trinity, says Richard of St. Lawrence, bestowed on thee a name above every other name after that of thy Son, and ennobled it with such majesty and power, that He willed that all heaven, earth, and hell, on only hearing it, should fall down and venerate it; but I will give the author's own words: 'The whole Trinity, O Mary, gave thee a name, after that of thy Son, above every other name, that in

thy name every knee should bow, of things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.' But amongst the other privileges of the name of Mary, and which were given to it by God, we will now examine that of the peculiar sweetness found in it by the servants of this most holy Lady.

And in the first place, the holy anchoret Honorius used to say, that 'this name of Mary is filled with every sweetness and Divine savour,' so much so that the glorious St. Anthony of Padua found the same sweetness in the name of Mary that St. Bernard found in that of Jesus. 'Name of Jesus!' exclaimed the one. 'O name of Mary!' replied the other; 'joy in the heart, honey in the mouth, melody to the ear of her devout clients.' It is narrated in the life of the Ven. Father Juvenal Ancina, bishop of Saluzzo, that in pronouncing the name of Mary he tasted so great and sensible a sweetness, that, after doing so, he licked his lips. We read also, that a lady at Cologne told the Bishop Massilius, that as often as she uttered the name of Mary, she experienced a taste far sweeter than honey. The bishop imitated her, and experienced the same thing.

But here I do not intend to speak of that sensible sweetness, for it is not granted to all; I speak of that salutary sweetness of consola-

tion, of love, of joy, of confidence, of strength, which the name of Mary ordinarily brings to those who pronounce it with devotion. The Abbot Francone, speaking on this subject, says, 'there is no other name, after that of the Son, in heaven or on earth, whence pious minds derive so much grace, hope, and sweetness.' After the most sacred name of Jesus the name of Mary is so rich in every good thing, that on earth, and in heaven, there is no other from which devout souls receive so much grace, hope, and sweetness. 'For,' he continues, 'there is something so admirable, sweet, and divine in this name of Mary, that when it meets with friendly hearts it breathes into them an odour of delightful sweetness.' And he adds, in conclusion, 'that the wonder of this great name is, that if heard by the lovers of Mary a thousand times, it is always heard again with renewed pleasure, for they always experience the same sweetness each time it is pronounced.'

The Blessed Henry Suso, also speaking of this sweetness, says, 'that when he named Mary, he felt himself so excited to confidence, and inflamed with such love and joy, that between the tears and joy, with which he pronounced the beloved name, he desired that his heart might leave his breast; for he declared that this most sweet name was like a honey-

comb, dissolving in the inmost recess of his soul:' and then he would exclaim: 'O most sweet name! O Mary, what must thou thyself be, since thy name alone is thus amiable and gracious!'

'And if riches comfort the poor, because they relieve them in their distress, O how much more does thy name, O Mary,' says Richard of St. Lawrence, 'comfort us than any earthly riches? It comforts us in the anguishes of this life.' 'Thy name, O Mary, is far better than riches, because it can better relieve poverty.' In fine, 'thy name, O Mother of God, is filled with Divine graces and blessings,' as St. Methodius says. So much so, that St. Bonaventure declares, 'that thy name, O Mary, cannot be pronounced without bringing some grace to him who does so devoutly.'

Let us, therefore, always take advantage of the beautiful advice given us by St. Bernard in these words: 'In dangers, in perplexities, in doubtful cases, think of Mary, call on Mary; let her not leave thy lips; let her not depart from thy heart.' In every danger of forfeiting Divine grace, we should think of Mary, and invoke her name, together with that of Jesus; for these two names always go together. O, then, never let us permit these two most sweet names to leave our hearts, or

be off our lips; for they will give us strength not only not to yield, but to conquer all our temptations. Consoling indeed are the promises of help made by Jesus Christ, to those who have devotion to the name of Mary; for one day, in the hearing of St. Bridget, He promised His most holy Mother that He would grant three special graces to those who invoke that holy name with confidence: first, that He would grant them perfect sorrow for their sins; secondly, that their crimes should be atoned for; and, thirdly, strength to attain perfection, and at length the glory of paradise.

EXAMPLE.

A woman came to a house of our little congregation in this kingdom to let one of the fathers know that her husband had not been to confession for many years, and the poor creature could no longer tell by what means to bring him to his duty; for if she named confession to him he beat her. The father told her to give him a picture of Mary Immaculate. In the evening the woman once more begged her husband to go to confession; but as he as usual turned a deaf ear to her entreaties, she gave him the picture. Behold! he had scarcely received it, when he said, 'Well, when will you take me to confession,

for I am willing to go?' The wife, on seeing this instantaneous change, began to weep for joy. In the morning he really came to our church, and when the father asked him how long it was since he had been to confession, he answered twenty-eight years. The father again asked him what had induced him to come that morning? 'Father,' he replied, 'I was obstinate, but last night my wife gave me a picture of our Blessed Lady, and in the same moment I felt my heart changed, so much so, that during the whole night every moment seemed a thousand years, so great was my desire to go to confession.' He then confessed his sins with great contrition, changed his life, and continued for a long time to go frequently to confession to the same father.

PRAYER.

O great Mother of God and my Mother Mary, it is true that I am unworthy to name thee; but thou, who lovest me and desirest my salvation, must, notwithstanding the impurity of my tongue, grant that I may always invoke thy most holy and powerful name in my aid, for thy name is the succour of the living, and the salvation of the dying. Ah, most pure Mary, most sweet Mary, grant that from henceforth thy name may be the breath

of my life. O Lady, delay not to help me when I invoke thee, for in all the temptations which assail me, and in all my wants, I will never cease calling upon thee, and repeating again and again, Mary, Mary. Ah, Mary, most amiable Mary, with what consolation, what sweetness, what confidence, what tenderness, is my soul penetrated in only naming, in only thinking of thee. I thank my Lord and God, who, for my good, has given thee a name so sweet and deserving of love, and at the same time so powerful.

But, my sovereign Lady, I am not satisfied with only naming thee, I wish to name thee with love: I desire that my love may every hour remind me to call on thee, so that I may be able to exclaim with St. Bonaventure, 'O, name of the Mother of God, thou art my love.'

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.

OF THE SWEETNESS OF THE NAME OF MARY AT THE HOUR OF DEATH.

'He that is a friend, loveth at all times; and a brother is proved in distress,' says the Book of Proverbs. We can never know our friends and relations in the time of prosperity; it is only in the time of adversity that we see them in their true colours. People of the world never abandon a friend as long as he is in prosperity; but should misfortunes overtake him, and more particularly should he be at the point of death, they immediately forsake him. Mary does not act thus with her clients. In their afflictions, and more particularly in the sorrows of death—the greatest that can be endured in this world—this good Lady and Mother not only does not abandon her faithful servants, but as, during our exile, she is our life, so also is she, at our last hour, our sweetness, by obtaining us a calm and happy death. For from the day on which Mary had the privilege and sorrow of being present at the death of Jesus her Son, who was the head of all the predestined, it became her privilege to assist also at their deaths. And for this

reason the holy Church teaches us to beg this most Blessed Virgin to assist us, especially at the moment of death: 'Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death!'

The most holy name of Mary is sweet indeed to her clients during life, on account of the very great graces she obtains for them. But sweeter still will it be to them in death, on account of the tranquil and holy end that it will insure them. Father Sertorius Caputo exhorted all who assist the dying, frequently to pronounce the name of Mary; for this name of life and hope, when repeated at the hour of death, suffices to put the devils to flight, and to comfort such persons in their sufferings. St. Camillus of Lellis also recommended his religious, in the strongest terms, to remind the dying frequently to invoke the names of Jesus and Mary. This was his own custom when attending others; but O, how sweetly did he practise it himself on his death-bed, for then he pronounced the beloved names of Jesus and Mary with such tenderness, that he inflamed even those who heard him with love.

O how great are the sufferings of the dying! They suffer from remorse of conscience on account of past sins, from fear of the approaching judgment, and from the uncertainty of their eternal salvation. Then it is that hel

arms itself, and spares no efforts to gain the soul which is on the point of entering eternity; for it knows that only a short time remains in which to gain it, and that if it then loses it, it has lost it for ever. 'The devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time.' And for this reason the enemy of our salvation, whose charge it was to tempt the soul during life, does not choose at death to be alone, but calls others to his assistance, according to the prophet Isaias: 'Their houses shall be filled with serpents.' But how quickly do the rebellious spirits fly from the presence of the Queen of Heaven!

If at the hour of death we have only the protection of Mary, what need we fear from the whole of our infernal enemies? David, fearing the horrors of death, encouraged himself by placing his reliance in the death of the coming Redeemer, and in the intercession of the Virgin Mother.

Thomas à Kempis affirms, 'that the devils fear the Queen of Heaven to such a degree, that on only hearing her great name pronounced, they fly from him who does so as from a burning fire.'

Our Blessed Lady also told St. Bridget, 'that in the same way as the rebel angels fly from sinners who invoke the name of Mary,'

so also do 'the good angels approach nearer to just souls who pronounce her name with devotion.'

'Yes, truly blessed is he who loves thy sweet name, O Mother of God!' exclaims St. Bonaventure, for 'thy name is so glorious and admirable, that no one who remembers it has any fears at the hour of death.' Such is its power, that none of those who invoke it at the hour of death fear the assaults of their enemies.

O, that we may end our lives as did the Capuchin father, Fulgentius of Ascoli, who expired singing, 'O Mary, O Mary, the most beautiful of creatures! let us depart together;' or like blessed Henry the Cistercian, who expired in the very moment that he was pronouncing the most sweet name of Mary. Let us then, O devout reader, beg God to grant us, that at death the name of Mary may be the last word on our lips. This was the prayer of St. Germanus: 'May the last movement of my tongue be to pronounce the name of the Mother of God!' O sweet, O safe is that death which is accompanied and protected by such a saving name; for God only grants the grace of invoking it to those whom He is about to save.

EXAMPLE.

In Germany, there was a criminal who had been condemned to death, but he was obstinate,

and refused to make his confession. A Jesuit Father did all that he could to convert him; this good Father entreated him, wept, cast himself at his feet; but seeing that all was time lost, he at length said: 'Now, let us recite a "Hail Mary" together.' The criminal did so, and in an instant began to weep bitterly, confessed his sins with great compunction, and desired to die clasping an image of Mary in his arms.

PRAYER.

O my sweet Lady and Mother, I love thee much, and because I love thee I also love thy holy name. I purpose and hope, with thy assistance, always to invoke it during life and at death. And to conclude with the tender prayer of St. Bernard: 'I ask thee, O Mary, for the glory of thy name, to come and meet my soul when it is departing from this world, and to take it in thine arms.' 'Disdain not, O Mary,' the Saint continues, 'to come then and comfort me with thy presence. Be thyself my soul's ladder and way to heaven. Do thou thyself obtain for it the grace of forgiveness and eternal repose.'

My own dear Mary, O my beloved Jesus, may your most sweet names reign in my heart, and in all hearts. Grant that I may forget all others, to remember, and always invoke,

your adorable names alone. Ah! Jesus my Redeemer, and my Mother Mary, when the moment of death comes, in which I must breathe forth my soul and leave this world, deign, through your merits, to grant that I may then pronounce my last words, and that they may be, '*I love Thee, O Jesus, I love thee, O Mary;* to you do I give my heart and my soul.'

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.

MARY RENDERS DEATH SWEET TO HER CLIENTS.

THE prophet Isaias tells us that when a man is on the point of leaving the world, hell is opened and sends forth its most terrible demons, both to tempt the soul before it leaves the body, and also to accuse it when presented before the tribunal of Jesus Christ for judgment. The prophet says, 'Hell below was in an uproar to meet thee at thy coming, it stirred up the giants for thee.' But Richard of St. Lawrence remarks, that when the soul is defended by Mary, the devils dare not even accuse it, knowing that the Judge never condemned, and never will condemn, a soul protected by His august Mother. He asks, 'Who would dare accuse one who is patronised by the Mother of Him who is to judge?' Mary not only assists her beloved servants at death and encourages them, but she herself accompanies them to the tribunal seat of God. As St. Jerome says, writing to the virgin Eustochia, 'What a day of joy will that be for thee, when Mary, the Mother of our Lord, accompanied by choirs of virgins, will go to meet thee.'

The Blessed Virgin assured St. Bridget of this, for speaking of her devout clients at the point of death, she said, 'Then will I, their dear Lady and Mother, fly to them, that they may have consolation and refreshment.' St. Vincent Ferrers says, that not only does the most Blessed Virgin console and refresh them, but that she receives the souls of the dying. This loving Queen takes them under her mantle, and thus presents them to the Judge her Son, and most certainly obtains their salvation.

Ecclesiasticus says, that 'her bands are a healthful binding,' and that 'in the latter end thou shalt find rest in her.' O, you are indeed fortunate, my brother, if at death you are bound with the sweet chains of the love of the Mother of God! These chains are chains of salvation; they are chains that will insure your eternal salvation, and will make you enjoy in death that blessed peace which will be the beginning of your eternal peace and rest. Father Binetti, in his book on the perfections of our Blessed Lord, says, 'that having attended the death-bed of a great lover of Mary, he heard him, before expiring, utter these words: O my father, would that you could know the happiness that I now enjoy from having served the most holy Mother of God; I cannot tell you the joy that I now experience.' Father Suarez (in conse-

quence of his devotion to Mary, which was such that he used to say, that he would willingly change all his learning for the merit of a single 'Hail Mary') died with such peace and joy, that, in that moment, he said, 'I could not have thought that death was so sweet;' meaning, that he could never have imagined that it was possible, if he had not then experienced it, that he could have found such sweetness in death. You, devout reader, will, without doubt, experience the same joy and contentment in death, if you can then remember that you have loved this good Mother, who cannot be otherwise than faithful to her children, who have been faithful in serving and honouring her, by their visits, rosaries, and fasts; and still more by frequently thanking and praising her, and often recommending themselves to her powerful protection.

Nor will this consolation be withheld, even if you have been for a time a sinner, provided that, from this day, you are careful to live well, and to serve this most gracious and benign Lady. She, in your pains, and in the temptations to despair which the devil will send you, will console you, and even come herself to assist you in your last moments.

And if, by chance, at that moment, you are greatly alarmed, and lose confidence at the sight of your sins, she will come and encourage you.

Let us then be of good heart, though we be sinners, and feel certain that Mary will come and assist us at death, and comfort and console us with her presence, provided only that we serve her with love during the remainder of the time that we have to be in this world.

EXAMPLE.

Father Crasset relates, that a military commander told him that once, after a battle, he found a soldier in the camp, who, holding a rosary and Mary's scapular in his hand, asked for a confessor; his forehead was pierced by a musket ball, which had come out at the back of his head, so that the brain was visible and came out through each opening, so much so, indeed, that naturally he could not live. He raised himself up, made his confession to the chaplain with great compunction, and when he had received absolution, expired.

PRAYER.

O comfortress of the afflicted, console a poor creature who recommends himself to thee. The remorse of a conscience overburdened with sins fills me with affliction. I am in doubt as to whether I have sufficiently grieved for them. I see that all my actions are soiled and defective; hell awaits my death in order to accuse me; the outraged justice of God de-

mands satisfaction. My Mother, what will become of me? If thou dost not help me, I am lost. What sayest thou, wilt thou assist me? O compassionate Virgin, console me; obtain me true sorrow for my sins; obtain me strength to amend, and to be faithful to God, during the rest of my life. And finally, when I am in the last agonies of death, O Mary, my hope, abandon me not; then more than ever help and encourage me, that I may not despair at the sight of my sins, which the Evil One will then place before me. My Lady, forgive my temerity; come thyself to comfort me with thy presence in that last struggle. This favour thou hast granted to many, grant it also to me. If my boldness is great, thy goodness is greater; for it goes in search of the most miserable to console them. On this I rely. For thy eternal glory, let it be said that thou hast snatched a wretched creature from hell, to which he was already condemned, and that thou hast led him to thy kingdom. O yes, sweet Mother, I hope to have the consolation of remaining always at thy feet in heaven, thanking and blessing and loving thee eternally. O Mary, I shall expect thee at my last hour, deprive me not of this consolation. Fiat, fiat. Amen, amen.

THE TWENTY-NINTH DAY.

MARY DELIVERS HER CLIENTS FROM HELL.

It is impossible for a client of Mary, who is faithful in honouring and recommending himself to her, to be lost. When we say that it is impossible for a client of Mary to be lost, we must not be understood as speaking of those clients who take advantage of this devotion, that they may sin more freely. And, therefore, those who disapprove of the great praises bestowed on the clemency of this most Blessed Virgin, because it causes the wicked to take advantage of it, to sin with greater freedom, do so without foundation, for such presumptive people deserve chastisement, and not mercy, for their rash confidence. It is, therefore, to be understood of those clients who, with a sincere desire to amend, are faithful in honouring and recommending themselves to the Mother of God. It is, I say, morally impossible that such as these should be lost. St. Anselm says, 'that as it is impossible for one who is not devout to Mary, and consequently not protected by her, to be saved, so is it impossible for one who recommends himself to her, and consequently is be-

loved by her, to be lost.' Many others declare the same thing, such as blessed Albert, who says, that 'All those who are not thy servants, O Mary, will perish.' And St. Bonaventure: 'He who neglects the service of the Blessed Virgin will die in his sins.' Again, 'He who does not invoke thee, O Lady, will never get to Heaven.' And, on the 99th psalm, the Saint even says, 'that not only those from whom Mary turns her face will not be saved, but that there will be no hope of their salvation.' Before him, St. Ignatius the martyr said, 'that it was impossible for any sinner to be saved without the help and favour of the most Blessed Virgin; because those who are not saved by the justice of God are, with infinite mercy, saved by the intercession of Mary.' Some doubt as to whether this passage is truly of St. Ignatius; but, at all events, as Father Crasset remarks, it was adopted by St. John Chrysostom. It is also repeated by the venerable Raymond Jordano. And in the same sense does the Church apply to Mary the words of Proverbs: 'All that hate me, love death:' that is, all who do not love me, love eternal death. For, as Richard of St. Lawrence says—on the words of the same book, 'She is like the merchant's ship'—'All those who are out of this ship will be lost in the sea of the world.' Even the heretical Œco-

lampadius looked upon little devotion to the Mother of God as a certain mark of reprobation: and therefore he said, 'Far be it from me ever to turn from Mary.'

But, on the other hand, Mary says in the words applied to her by the Church, 'He that hearkeneth to me shall not be confounded;' that is to say, he who listeneth to what I say shall not be lost. On which St. Bonaventure says, 'O Lady, he who honours thee will be far from damnation.' And this will still be the case, St. Hilary observes, even should the person, during the past time, have greatly offended God. 'However great a sinner he may have been,' says the saint, 'if he shows himself devout to Mary he will never perish.'

For this reason the devil does his utmost with sinners, in order that after they have lost the grace of God, they may also lose devotion to Mary. The devil, also, is not satisfied with a soul turning out Jesus Christ unless it also turns out His Mother. Otherwise he fears that the Mother will again, by her intercession, bring back her Son. 'And his fears are well grounded,' says the learned Paciucchelli; 'for he who is faithful in serving the Mother of God will soon receive God Himself by the means of Mary.' St. Ephrem then was right in calling devotion to our Blessed Lady 'a Divine charter,' our safe-

guard from hell. The same saint also calls the Divine Mother 'the only hope of those who are in despair.' That which St. Bernard says is certainly true, 'that neither the power nor the will to save us can be wanting to Mary:' the power cannot be wanting, for it is impossible that her prayers should not be heard, as St. Antoninus says, 'It is impossible that a Mother of God should pray in vain;' and St. Bernard says the same thing; 'that her requests can never be refused, but that she obtains whatever she wills:' the will to save us cannot be wanting, for Mary is our Mother, and desires our salvation more than we can desire it ourselves. Since then this is the case, how can it be possible for a client of Mary to be lost? He may be a sinner, but if he recommends himself to this good Mother, with perseverance and purpose of amendment, she will undertake to obtain him light to abandon his wicked state, sorrow for his sins, perseverance in virtue, and, finally, a good death. And what mother would not deliver her son from death if it only depended on her asking the favour to obtain it from the judge? And can we think that Mary, who loves her clients with a Mother's most tender love, will not deliver her child from eternal death when she can do it so easily?

'O, how many would have remained ob-

stinate in sin, and have been eternally lost,' says Thomas à Kempis, 'if Mary had not interposed with her Son, that He might show them mercy!'

'What, then, will be our lot, O tender Mother,' let us ask with St. Germanus, 'who are sinners, but desire to change, and have recourse to thee, who art the life of Christians?' St. Anselm says, 'that he will not be lost for whom thou once prayest.' O, pray then for us, and we shall be preserved from hell.

EXAMPLE.

In the year 1604, in a city of Flanders, there were two young men, students; but who, instead of attending to their studies, gave themselves up to a life of debauchery. One night they were both in a house with an evil companion, when one of them, named Richard, returned home, leaving his companion there. After he got home, and had begun to undress, he remembered he had not that day said some 'Hail Marys' that he was in the habit of reciting. Feeling very sleepy he was loth to say them; he did himself violence, and repeated them, though without devotion, and half asleep. He then laid down, and had fallen into a sound slumber, when he was suddenly roused by a violent knocking at the door, and

without its opening he saw his companion, deformed and hideous, standing before him. 'Who art thou?' he cried out. 'What! dost thou not know me?' 'Ah! yes, but how thou art changed; thou seemest to me a devil.' 'Truly,' he exclaimed, 'poor unfortunate creature that I am, I am damned, and how? When I was leaving that wicked house a devil came and strangled me: my body is in the street, and my soul in hell; and thou must know,' added he, 'that the same fate awaited thee had not the Blessed Virgin preserved thee in consideration of that little act of homage of the "Hail Mary." Fortunate art thou if only thou knowest how to take advantage of this warning sent thee by the Mother of God!' With these words he opened his mantle, and showing the flames and serpents by which he was tormented, he disappeared. Richard immediately burst into sobs and tears, and casting himself prostrate on the ground, he returned thanks to Mary, his protectress; and, whilst thinking how to change his life, he heard the bell of the Franciscan monastery ringing for matins. 'Ah! it is there,' says he, 'that God calls me to do penance.' He went straight off to the convent, and implored the fathers to admit him. But they were hardly willing to do so, knowing his wicked life; but he, sobbing bitterly, told all that had taken place;

and two fathers being sent to the street, and having found the strangled body, which was as black as a coal, they admitted him. From that time forward Richard led a most exemplary life, and, at length, went to preach the gospel in the Indies; and thence to Japan, where he had the happiness of giving his life for Jesus Christ, being burnt alive for the Faith.

PRAYER.

O Mary, my most dear Mother, in what an abyss of evils should I not now be, if thou hadst not so many times delivered me with thy compassionate hand! How many years ago should I not have been in hell, hadst thou not saved me by thy powerful prayers! My grievous sins already drove me there; Divine justice had already condemned me; the devils already longed to execute the sentence; and thou didst fly to my aid, and save me without being even called or asked. And what return can I make to thee, O my beloved protectress, for so many favours, and for such love? Thou also didst overcome the hardness of my heart, and didst draw me to thy love, and to confidence in thee. And into how many other evils should I not have fallen, if with thy compassionate hand thou hadst not so often helped me in the dangers into which I was on the point of fall-

ing! Continue, O my hope, to preserve me from hell, and from the sins into which I may still fall. Never allow me to have this misfortune—to curse thee in hell. My beloved Lady, I love thee. Can thy goodness ever endure to see a servant of thine that loves thee lost? Ah, then, obtain that I may never more be ungrateful to thee and to my God, who, for the love of thee, has granted me so many graces. O Mary, tell me, shall I be lost? Yes, if I abandon thee. But is this possible? Can I ever forget the love thou hast borne me? Thou, after God, art the love of my soul. I can no longer trust myself to live without loving thee. O most beautiful, most holy, most amiable, sweetest creature in the world, I rejoice in thy happiness, I love thee, and I hope always to love thee both in time and in eternity. Amen.

THE THIRTIETH DAY.

MARY SUCCOURS HER CLIENTS IN PURGATORY.

FORTUNATE, indeed, are the clients of this most compassionate Mother, for not only does she succour them in this world, but even in purgatory they are helped and comforted by her protection. And as in that prison poor souls are in the greatest need of assistance, since in their torments they cannot help themselves, our Mother of Mercy does proportionately more to relieve them. St. Bernardine of Sienna says, 'that in that prison, where souls which are spouses of Jesus Christ are detained, Mary has a certain dominion and plenitude of power, not only to relieve them, but even to deliver them from their pains.'

And, first, with respect to the relief she gives, the same Saint, in applying those words of Ecclesiasticus, 'I have walked in the waves of the sea,' adds, 'that it is by visiting and relieving the necessities and torments of her clients, who are her children.' He then says, 'that the pains of purgatory are called waves, because they are transitory; unlike the pains of hell, which never end: and they are called waves of the sea, because they are so bitter.

The clients of Mary, thus suffering, are often visited and relieved by her.' 'See, therefore,' says Novarinus, 'of what consequence it is to be the servant of this good Lady, for her servants she never forgets when they are suffering in those flames; for though Mary relieves all suffering souls in purgatory, yet she always obtains far greater indulgence and relief for her own clients.'

The Divine Mother once addressed these words to St. Bridget: 'I am the Mother of all souls in purgatory; for all the pains that they have deserved for their sins are every hour, as long as they remain there, in some way mitigated by my prayers.' The compassionate Mother even condescends to go herself occasionally into that holy prison to visit and comfort her suffering children.

And what other consolation have they in their sufferings than Mary, and the relief they receive from this Mother of Mercy? St. Bridget once heard Jesus say to His holy Mother, 'Thou art My Mother, the Mother of Mercy, and the consolation of souls in purgatory.' The Blessed Virgin herself told the Saint, 'that as a poor sick person, bedridden, suffering, and abandoned, is relieved by words of encouragement and consolation, so are the souls in purgatory consoled and relieved by only hearing her name.' The mere name of

Mary, that name of hope and salvation, and which is frequently invoked by her beloved children in their prison, is a great source of comfort to them; 'for,' says Novarinus, 'that loving Mother no sooner hears them call upon her, than she offers her prayers to God, and these prayers, as a heavenly dew, immediately refresh them in their burning pains.'

Mary not only consoles and relieves her clients in purgatory, but she delivers them by her prayers. Gerson says, 'that on the day of her assumption into heaven purgatory was entirely emptied.' Novarinus confirms this, saying, 'that it is maintained by many grave authors, that when Mary was going to heaven, she asked, as a favour from her Son, to take all the souls then in purgatory with her.' 'And from that time forward,' says Gerson, 'Mary had the privilege of delivering her servants.' St. Bernardine of Sienna also positively asserts, 'that the Blessed Virgin has the power of delivering souls from purgatory, but particularly those of her clients: by her prayers, and by applying her merits for them.' Novarinus says, 'that by the merits of Mary, not only are the pains of those souls lessened, but the time of their sufferings is shortened through her intercession.' She has only to ask, and all is done.

Why should we not hope for the same graces

and favours, if we are devout clients of this good Mother? And if we serve her with more special love, why can we not hope to go to heaven immediately after death, without even going to purgatory? This really took place in the case of Blessed Godfrey, to whom Mary sent the following message, by Brother Abondo: 'Tell Brother Godfrey to endeavour to advance rapidly in virtue, and thus he will belong to my Son and to me; and when his soul departs, I will not allow it to go to purgatory, but will take it and offer it to my Son.' And if we wish to relieve the holy souls in purgatory, let us do so by imploring the aid of our Blessed Lady in all our prayers, and especially by offering the Rosary for them, as that relieves them greatly.

EXAMPLE.

We read, in the life of Sister Catherine of St. Augustine, that in the place where she resided there was a woman, of the name of Mary, who in her youth was a sinner, and in her old age continued so obstinate in wickedness, that she was driven out of the city, and reduced to live in a secluded cave; there she died, half consumed by disease, and without the sacraments, and was consequently interred in a field like a beast. Sister Cathe-

rine, who always recommended the souls of those who departed from this world, with great fervour, to God, on hearing the unfortunate end of this poor old woman, never thought of praying for her, and she looked upon her (as did every one else) as irrevocably lost. One day, four years afterwards, a suffering soul appeared to her, and exclaimed: 'How unfortunate is my lot, Sister Catherine; thou recommendest the souls of all those that die to God: on my soul alone thou hast not compassion!' 'And who art thou?' asked the servant of God. 'I am,' she replied, 'that poor Mary, who died in the cave.' 'And art thou saved?' said Catherine. 'Yes,' she answered, 'by the mercy of the Blessed Virgin Mary.' 'And how?' 'When I saw myself at the point of death, loaded with sins, and abandoned by all, I had recourse to the Mother of God, saying, Lady, thou art the refuge of abandoned creatures: behold me, at this moment, abandoned by all; thou art my only hope; thou alone canst help me: have pity on me. The Blessed Virgin obtained me the grace to make an act of contrition. I died, and am saved; and besides this she, my Queen, obtained that my purgatory should be shortened, by enduring, in intensity, that which otherwise would have lasted for many years: I now only want a few masses to be

entirely delivered; I beg thee to get them said, and on my part, I promise always to pray for thee to God and to Mary.' Sister Catherine immediately had the masses said; and after a few days that soul again appeared to her, shining like the sun, and said: 'I thank thee, Catherine: behold, I go to Paradise, to sing the mercies of my God, and to pray for thee.'

PRAYER.

O Queen of Heaven and earth! O Mother of the Lord of the world! O Mary, of all creatures the greatest, the most exalted, and the most amiable! It is true, that there are many in this world who neither know thee, nor love thee; but in heaven, there are many millions of angels and blessed spirits, who love and praise thee continually. Even in this world, how many happy souls are there not, who burn with thy love, and live enamoured of thy goodness! O, that I also could love thee, O Lady, worthy of all love. O that I could always remember to serve thee, to praise thee, to honour thee, and engage all to love thee. Thou hast attracted the love of God, whom, by thy beauty, thou hast, so to say, torn from the bosom of His Eternal Father, and engaged to become man, and be thy Son. And shall I, a poor worm of the

earth, not be enamoured of thee? No, my most sweet Mother, I also will love thee much, and will do all that I can to make others love thee also. Accept then, O Mary, the desire that I have to love thee, and help me to execute it. I know how favourably thy lovers are looked upon by God. He, after His own glory, desires nothing more than thine, and to see thee honoured and loved by all. From thee, O Lady, do I expect all; through thee the remission of my sins, through thee perseverance. Thou must assist me at death, and deliver me from purgatory; and finally, thou must lead me to heaven. All this thy lovers hope from thee, and are not deceived. I, who love thee with so much affection, and above all other things, after God, hope for the same favours.

THE THIRTY-FIRST DAY.

MARY LEADS HER SERVANTS TO HEAVEN.

O, WHAT an evident mark of predestination have the servants of Mary! The holy Church, for the consolation of her clients, puts into her mouth the words of Ecclesiasticus, 'In all these I sought rest, and I shall abide in the inheritance of the Lord.' Cardinal Hugo explains these words, and says, 'Blessed is he in whose house the most Holy Virgin finds repose.' Mary, out of the love she bears to all, endeavours to excite in all devotion towards herself; many either do not admit it into their souls, or do not preserve it. But blessed is he that receives, and preserves it. O, how many blessed souls are there now in heaven, who would never have been there had not Mary, by her powerful intercession, led them thither.

St. Bonaventure says, 'that the gates of heaven will open to all who confide in the protection of Mary.' Hence St. Ephrem calls devotion to the Divine Mother, 'the unlocking of the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem.' The devout Blosius also, addressing our Blessed

Lady, says, 'To thee, O Lady, are committed the keys and the treasures of the kingdom of heaven.' And therefore we ought constantly to pray to her, in the words of St. Ambrose, 'Open to us, O Mary, the gates of paradise, since thou hast its keys.' Nay, more, the Church says, 'that thou art its gate.'

For the same reason, finally, is she called, by St. Peter Damian, 'the heavenly ladder.' 'For,' says the Saint, 'by Mary God descended from heaven into the world, that by her men might ascend from earth to heaven.'

St. Antoninus tells us 'that this Divine Mother has already, by her assistance and prayers, obtained heaven for us, provided we put no obstacle in the way.' Hence says the Abbot Guarric, 'He who serves Mary, and for whom she intercedes, is as certain of heaven as if he was already there.' St. John Damascen also says, 'that to serve Mary and be her courtier is the greatest honour we can possibly possess; for to serve the Queen of Heaven is already to reign there, and to live under her commands is more than to govern.' On the other hand, he adds, 'that those who do not serve Mary will not be saved; for those who are deprived of the help of this great Mother are also deprived of that of her Son and of the whole court of heaven.' 'May the infinite goodness of our Lord be ever praised,'

says St. Bernard, 'for having been pleased to give us Mary as our advocate in heaven, that she being at the same time the Mother of our Judge and a Mother of Mercy, may be able, by her intercession, to conduct to a prosperous issue the great affair of our eternal salvation.' St. James, a doctor of the Greek Church, says, 'that God destined Mary as a bridge of salvation, by using which we might with safety pass over the stormy sea of this world, and reach the happy haven of paradise.' Therefore St. Bonaventure exclaims, 'Give ear, O ye nations, and all you who desire heaven, serve, honour Mary, and certainly you will find eternal life.'

Nor should those even who have deserved hell, be in the least doubtful as to obtaining heaven, provided they are faithful in serving this Queen. 'O, how many sinners,' says St. Germanus, 'have found God and have been saved by thy means, O Mary!'

It is true that in this world no one can be certain of his salvation: 'Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred,' says the Ecclesiastes. But St. Bonaventure, on the words of King David, 'Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle?' and on the preceding quotation, answers, 'Sinners, let us follow Mary closely, and casting ourselves at her feet, let us not leave them until she has blessed

us; for her blessing will insure our salvation.' 'It suffices, O Lady,' says St. Anselm, 'that thou willest it, and our salvation is certain.' And St. Antoninus says, 'that souls protected by Mary, and on which she casts her eyes, are necessarily justified and saved.'

St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi saw a vessel in the midst of the sea: in it were all the clients of Mary, and this Blessed Mother herself steered it safely into the port. By this the Saint understood, that those who live under the protection of Mary, are secure in the midst of the dangers of this life from the shipwreck of sin, and from eternal damnation; for she guides them safely into the haven of salvation. Let us then enter this blessed ship of the mantle of Mary, and there we can be certain of the kingdom of heaven, for the Church says, 'O holy Mother of God, all those who will be partakers of eternal happiness dwell in thee, living under thy protection.'

EXAMPLE.

A Cistercian nun, in Toledo, named Mary, being at the point of death, the Divine Mother appeared to her. The nun then said: 'O Lady, the favour thou dost me in visiting me, emboldens me to ask thee another favour; it is, that I may die at the same hour in which

thou didst expire and enter heaven.' 'Yes,' Mary replied; 'I will satisfy thee, thou shalt die at that hour, and thou shalt also hear the songs and praises, with which the blessed accompanied my entrance into heaven: prepare thyself;' and then disappeared. The nuns, hearing her speaking to herself, thought that she was in delirium; but she related the vision which she had had to them, and the promised favour. She awaited the desired hour; and when she knew, by the striking of the clock, that it had arrived (the writer does not say what hour it was), she said, 'Behold the hour announced to me: I already hear the music of the angels: this is the hour in which my Queen ascended to heaven; peace be with you, for I now go to see her.' With these words she expired. In the same moment her eyes became bright as two stars, and her face became of a beautiful colour.

PRAYER.

O Queen of heaven, Mother of holy love since thou art the most amiable of creatures, the most beloved of God, and His greatest lover, be pleased to allow the most miserable sinner living in this world, who, having by thy means been delivered from hell, and without any merit on his part been so benefited by thee, and who is filled with love for thee, to

love thee. I would desire, were it in my power, to let all men who know thee not, know how worthy thou art of love, that all might love and honour thee. I would desire to die for the love of thee, in defence of thy virginity, of thy dignity of Mother of God, of thy Immaculate Conception, should this be necessary to uphold these thy great privileges. Ah! my most beloved Mother, accept this my ardent desire, and never allow a servant of thine, who loves thee, to become the enemy of thy God, whom thou lovest so much. Alas! poor me, I was so for a time, when I offended my Lord. But then, O Mary, I loved thee but little, and strove but little to be beloved by thee. But now there is nothing that I so much desire after the grace of God as to love, and be beloved by thee. I am not discouraged on account of my past sins, for I know that thou, O most benign and gracious Lady, dost not disdain to love even the most wretched sinners who love thee; nay, more, that thou never allowest thyself to be surpassed by any in love. Ah! Queen, most worthy of love, I desire to love thee in heaven. There, at thy feet, I shall better know how worthy thou art of love, how much thou hast done to save me, and thus I shall love thee with greater love, and love thee eternally, without fear of ever ceasing to love thee. O Mary, I hope, most certainly, to be

saved by thy means. Pray to Jesus for me. Nothing else is needed; thou hast to save me; thou art my hope. I will therefore always sing, O Mary, my hope, thou hast to save me.

CONCLUSION.

OF THE NECESSITY OF THE INTERCESSION OF MARY FOR OUR SALVATION.

St. Bernard says, 'that as a man and a woman co-operated in our ruin, so it was proper that another man and another woman should co-operate in our redemption; and these two were Jesus, and His Mother Mary.' 'There is no doubt,' says the Saint, 'that Jesus Christ alone was more than sufficient to redeem us, but it was more becoming that both sexes should co-operate in the reparation of an evil, in causing which both had shared.' Hence blessed Albert the Great calls Mary 'the Helper of Redemption;' and this Blessed Virgin herself revealed to St. Bridget, that 'as Adam and Eve sold the world for an apple, so did she with her Son redeem it as it were with one heart.' This is confirmed by St. Anselm, who says, 'that although God could create the world out of nothing, yet when it was lost by sin, He would not repair the evil without the co-operation of Mary.'

Suarez says, 'that Mary co-operated in our salvation in three ways; first, by having

merited by a merit of congruity the Incarnation of the Word; secondly, by having continually prayed for us whilst she was living in this world; thirdly, by having willingly sacrificed the life of her Son to God.' For this reason our Lord has justly decreed, that as Mary co-operated in the salvation of man with so much love, and at the same time gave such glory to God, so all men, through her intercession, are to obtain their salvation.

Jesus Christ says, that no one can find Him unless the Eternal Father first draws him by the means of Divine grace: 'No one comes to Me, unless My Father draws him.' Thus also does Jesus address His Mother, says Richard of St. Lawrence: 'No one comes to Me, unless My Mother first of all draws him by her prayers.' Jesus was the fruit of Mary, as St. Elizabeth told her: 'Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.' Whoever, therefore, desires the fruit, must go to the tree; whoever desires Jesus, must go to Mary; and whoever finds Mary, will most certainly find Jesus.

When St. Elizabeth saw that the most Blessed Virgin had come to visit her in her own house, not knowing how to thank her, and filled with humility, she exclaimed: 'And whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should visit me?' But how could this

be, we may ask? Did not St. Elizabeth already know, that not only Mary, but also Jesus, had entered her house? Why then does she say, that she is unworthy to receive the Mother; and not rather, that she is unworthy to receive the Son, who had come to visit her. Ah, yes, it was that the Saint knew full well that when Mary comes she brings Jesus, and therefore it was sufficient to thank the Mother without naming the Son.

But let us now see what the Saints say of the need in which we are of the intercession of the Divine Mother. The glorious St. Cajetan used to say, that we may seek for graces, but shall never find them without the intercession of Mary. This is confirmed by St. Antoninus, who thus beautifully expresses himself: 'Whoever asks and expects to obtain graces without the intercession of Mary, endeavours to fly without wings;' for, as Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'The land of Egypt is in thy hands;' and bade all who came to him for food to go to Joseph; so does God send us to Mary when we seek for grace: 'Go to Mary;' for 'He has decreed,' says St. Bernard, 'that He will grant no graces otherwise than by the hands of Mary.' Cassian speaks in still stronger terms. He says absolutely, 'that the salvation of all depends on their being favoured and protected by Mary.' He

who is protected by Mary will be saved; he who is not, will be lost. St. Bernardine of Sienna thus addresses this Blessed Virgin: 'O Lady, since thou art the dispenser of all graces, and since the grace of salvation can only come through thy hands, our salvation depends on thee.' Therefore, Richard of St. Lawrence had good reason for saying, that 'as we should fall into the abyss, if the ground were withdrawn from under our feet, so does a soul deprived of the succour of Mary, first fall into sin, and then into hell.' St. Bonaventure says, that 'God will not save us without the intercession of Mary.' And, 'that as a child cannot live without a nurse to suckle it, so no one can be saved without the protection of Mary.' Therefore he exhorts us 'to thirst after devotion to her, to preserve it with care, and never to abandon it, until we have received her maternal blessing in heaven.' And whoever, exclaims St. Germanus, could know God were it not for thee, O most holy Mary? Who would be saved? Who would be preserved from dangers? Who would receive any grace, were it not for thee, O Mother of God, O full of grace! And in another place, addressing her, he says, 'No one would be free from the effects of the concupiscence of the flesh and from sin, unless thou didst open the way to him.'

Let us then, in the words of St. Bernard, 'endeavour to venerate this Divine Mother with the whole affection of our hearts; for such is the will of God, who is pleased that we should receive every good thing from her hand.' And therefore the Saint exhorts us, whenever we desire or ask for any grace, to recommend ourselves to Mary, and to be assured that we shall receive it by her means; for he says, if thou dost not deserve the favour from God, Mary, who will ask it for thee, will deserve to receive it.

EXAMPLE.

The event recorded by Father Paul Segneri, in his 'Christian Instructed,' is justly celebrated. A young man, of vicious habits and laden with sin, went to confession to Father Nicholas Zucchi in Rome. The confessor received him with charity, and, filled with compassion for his unfortunate state, assured him, that devotion to our Blessed Lady would deliver him from the accursed vice to which he was addicted; he therefore imposed on him as his penance, that he should say a 'Hail Mary' to the Blessed Virgin every morning and evening, on getting up and on going to bed, until his next confession; and, at the same time, that he should offer her his eyes,

his hands, and his whole body, beseeching her to preserve them as something belonging to herself, and that he should kiss the ground three times. The young man performed the penance, but at first there was only slight amendment. The father, however, continued to inculcate the same practice on him, desiring him never to abandon it, and, at the same time, encouraged him to confide in the patronage of Mary. In the mean time the penitent left Rome with other companions, and during several years, travelled in different parts of the world. On his return, he again sought out his confessor, who, to his great joy and admiration, found that he was entirely changed, and free from his former evil habits. 'My son,' said he, 'how hast thou obtained so wonderful a change from God?' The young man replied: 'Father, our Blessed Lady obtained me this grace on account of that little devotion which thou taughtest me.' Wonders did not cease here. The same confessor related the above fact from the pulpit; a captain heard it who for many years had carried on improper intercourse with a certain woman, and determined that he also would practise the same devotion, that he too might be delivered from the horrible chains which bound him a slave of the devil (for it is necessary that sinners should have this intention, in

order that the Blessed Virgin may be able to help them), and he also gave up his wickedness and changed his life.

But still more. After six months, he foolishly, and relying too much on his own strength, went to pay a visit to the woman, to see if she also was converted. But on coming up to the door of the house, where he was in manifest danger of relapsing into sin, he was driven back by an invisible power, and found himself as far from the house as the whole length of the street, and standing before his own door. He was then clearly given to understand that Mary had thus delivered him from perdition. From this we may learn how solicitous our good Mother is, not only to withdraw us from a state of sin, if we recommend ourselves to her for this purpose, but also to deliver us from the danger of relapsing into it.

PRAYER.

O Queen and Mother of mercy, who dispensest graces to all who have recourse to thee with so much liberality, because thou art a Queen, and with so much love, because thou art our most loving Mother; to thee do I, who am so devoid of merit and virtue, and so loaded with debts to the Divine justice, recommend myself this day. O Mary, thou

holdest the keys of all the Divine mercies; forget not my miseries, and leave me not in my poverty. Thou art so liberal with all, and givest more than thou art asked for; O be thus liberal with me! O Lady, protect me; this is all that I ask of thee. If thou protectest me, I fear nothing. I fear not the evil spirits; for thou art more powerful than all of them. I fear not my sins; for thou by one word canst obtain their full pardon from God. And if I have thy favour, I do not even fear an angry God; for a single prayer of thine will appease Him. In fine, if thou protectest me, I hope all; for thou art all-powerful. O Mother of mercy, I know that thou takest pleasure, and dost glory in helping the most miserable; and, provided they are not obstinate, that thou canst help them. I am a sinner, but am not obstinate; I desire to change my life. Thou canst then help me; O help me and save me. I now place myself entirely in thy hands. Tell me what I must do in order to please God, and I am ready for all, and hope to do all with thy help, O Mary—Mary, my Mother, my light, my consolation, my refuge, my hope. Amen, amen, amen.

HYMNS TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

Mary, our Hope.

Mary, thou art Hope the brightest,
Love most pure and sweet;
Life and peace I find, reposing
At thy blessed feet!

When I call on thee, O Mary,
When I think on thee,
Joy and pleasure all-entrancing
Fill my heart with glee.

If anon the clouds of sadness
Rise within my heart,
When they hear thy name, O Mary,
Straightway they depart.

Like a star on life's dark ocean
Shining o'er the wave,
Thou canst guide my bark to harbour,
Thou my soul canst save.

Under thy protecting mantle,
Queen beloved, I fly;
There I wish to live securely,
There I hope to die.

If I chance my life to finish,
Mary, loving thee,
Then I also know, dear Lady,
Heaven is for me.

Cast thy gentle bonds around me,
And my heart enchain;
Prisoner of love for ever,
Safe will I remain.

Thus my heart, O sweetest Mary,
Is not mine, but thine:
Take it; give it all to Jesus—
Ne'er shall it be mine.

MARY, VIRGIN OF VIRGINS.

Of all virgins thou art fairest,
Dearest Mary, heavenly Queen;
Of all creatures thou art purest,
Like to thee was never seen.

Thy sweet face is, like the heavens,
Full of grace and purity;
Beauty so divine adorns it,
God alone surpasses thee!

Thy bright eyes with love are beaming,
Like twin stars of heaven they shine;
And thy looks are flaming arrows,
Wounding hearts with love divine.

Thy chaste hands, whose sight enamours,
Are like pearls of lustre rare;
Ever full of heavenly treasures,
For all those who ask a share.

Queen art thou, whom all things worship,
Earth and hell, and heaven above;
But thy heart o'erflows with goodness,
Just and sinners feel thy love.

When, ah, when, at length in heaven,
May I hope thy face to see?
When, ah, when? my heart keeps sighing—
Haste—I faint—I pine for thee!

Souls unnumber'd thou dost ever
Rescue from the Evil One:
Dearest Lady, grant me also
Not to lose thy blessed Son.

Him who gave us such a Mother
Let our grateful songs proclaim;
Loving hearts and joyful voices,
Praise her great Creator's name!

Glory to the name of Mary!
Raise your voices—louder raise!
And of Jesus, Son of Mary,
Every creature chant the praise!

Aspirations to Mary.

Knowest thou, sweet Mary,
Whereto I aspire?
'Tis my hope to love thee,—
This is my desire.

I would e'er be near thee,
Queen most fair and sweet!
Do not, do not drive me
From my Mother's feet!

Then, O Rose most lovely!
Let me hear from thee;
Loving Mother! tell me
What thou wilt of me.

More I cannot offer,
Lo! I bring my heart;
Lovingly I give it,
Ne'er from thee to part.

Lady, thou didst take it,
'Tis no longer mine:
Long since thou didst love it,
And its love was thine.

Do not, then, forsake me,
Mother of sweet love,
Till one day thou see me
Safe in heaven above.

Our Mother Mary.

Thou art clement, thou art chaste,
Mary, thou art fair;
Of all mothers sweetest, best,
None with thee compare.

O Mother blest, whom God bestows
On sinners and on just,
What joy, what hope, thou givest those
Who in thy mercy trust!
Thou art clement, &c.

O heavenly Mother! Mistress sweet!
It never yet was told
That suppliant sinner left thy feet
Unpitied, unconsoled.
Thou art clement, &c.

O Mother, pitiful and mild,
Cease not to pray for me;
For I do love thee as a child,
And sigh for love of thee.
Thou art clement, &c.

Most pow'rful Mother, all men know
Thy Son denies thee naught;
Thou askest—wishest it—and, lo,
His power thy will has wrought.
Thou art clement, &c.

Mother of Love, for me obtain,
Ungrateful though I be,
To love that God who first could deign
To show such love to me.
Thou art clement, &c.

MARY, THE MOTHER OF MERCY.

Look down, O Mother Mary,
From thy bright throne above;
Cast down upon thy children
One only glance of love.

And if a heart so tender
With pity flows not o'er,
Then turn away, O Mother,
And look on us no more.

See how, ungrateful sinners,
We stand before thy Son;
His loving heart upbraids us
The evil we have done.

But if thou wilt appease Him,
Speak for us—but one word;
Thou only canst obtain us
The pardon of our Lord.

O Mary, dearest Mother,
If thou wouldst have us live,
Say that we are thy children,
And Jesus will forgive.

Our sins make us unworthy
That title still to bear;
But thou art still our Mother,
Then show a Mother's care.

Unfold to us thy mantle;
There stay we without fear:
What evil can befall us
If, Mother, thou art near?

O sweetest, dearest Mother,
Thy sinful children save;
Look down on us with pity,
Who thy protection crave.

The Name of Mary.

Mother Mary, Queen most sweet,
Joy and love my heart inflame;
Gladly shall my lips repeat
Every moment thy dear name.

Ah! that name, to God so dear,
Has my heart and soul enslaved;
Like a seal it shall appear
Deep on heart and soul engraved.

When the morning gilds the skies,
I will call on Mary's name;
When at evening twilight dies,
Mary still will I exclaim.

Sweetest Mary, bend thine ear:
Thou my own dear Mother art;
Therefore shall thy name so dear
Never from my lips depart.

If my soul is sore oppress'd
By a load of anxious care,
Peace once more will fill my breast
When thy name reëchoes there.

Waves of doubt disturb my peace,
And my heart is faint with fear;
At thy name the billows cease,
All my terrors disappear.

When the demon hosts invade,
When temptation rages high,
Crying, 'Mary, Mother, aid!'
I will make the tempter fly.

This shall be my comfort sweet,
When the hand of death is nigh,
Mary, Mary, to repeat
Once again, and then to die.

On the Loveliness of Mary.

Raise your voices, vales and mountains,
Flow'ry meadows, streams, and fountains,
Praise, O, praise the loveliest Maiden
Ever the Creator made.

Murm'ring brooks, your tribute bringing,
Little birds with joyful singing,
Come with mirthful praises laden;
To your Queen be homage paid.

Say, sweet Virgin, we implore thee,
Say what beauty God sheds o'er thee;
Praise and thanks to Him be given,
Who in love created thee.

Like a sun with splendour glowing
Gleams thy heart with love o'erflowing;
Like the moon in starry heaven
Shines thy peerless purity.

Like the rose and lily blooming,
Sweetly heaven and earth perfuming,
Stainless, spotless, thou appearest,
Queenly beauty graces thee.

But to God, in whom thou livest,
Sweeter joy and praise thou givest,
When, to Him in beauty nearest,
Yet so humble thou canst be.

Lovely Maid, to God most pleasing,
And for us His wrath appeasing,
O, by all thy love for Jesus,
Show to us thy clemency!

A Soul the Lover of Mary.

I am the lover of a Queen,
Whose heart so sweet and kind doth prove,
That, seeing one who seeks her love,
She scouts him not, though poor and mean.

She sits a Queen, with heavenly grace;
But from her throne her gentle eyes
Look down on him who humbly sighs
To see the beauty of her face.

This Virgin is so pure, that she
Was chosen by the Eternal Word
The Spouse, the Mother of our Lord;
And she has stol'n my heart from me.

O, could I but behold, one day,
All hearts with love of her inflamed,
And hear her sweetest name proclaim'd
By every tongue in joyful lay!

Then in sweet harmony should flow,
In every land, through endless days:
Praise be to Mary, ceaseless praise!
And praise to God who loved her so!

Let him who wills seek other love,
If earthly beauty can rejoice
His soul:—she only is my choice
Whose beauty ravish'd God above.

Then, Mary, stretch thy hand to me;
Sweet loving Robber, seize thy prey:
Take from my breast this heart away,
Which sighs and languishes for thee.

That fire of love into it pour
With which thou ceasest not to burn,
That my poor heart, like thine, may yearn
With love of Jesus evermore.

The Madonna's Lullaby.

Mary sings, the ravish'd heavens
Hush the music of their spheres;
Soft her voice, her beauty fairer
Than the glancing stars appears:
While to Jesus, slumbering nigh,
Thus she sings her lullaby:

'Sleep, my Babe, my God, my Treasure,
Gently sleep: but, ah! the sight
With its beauty so transports me,
I am dying of delight:
Thou canst not Thy Mother see,
Yet Thou breathest flames to me.

If within your lids enfolded,
Slumbering eyes, you seem so fair;
When upon my gaze you open,
How shall I your beauty bear?
Ah! I tremble when you wake,
Lest my heart with love should break.

Cheeks than sweetest roses sweeter,
Mouth where lurks a smile divine,—
Though the kiss my Babe should waken,
I must press those lips to mine.
Pardon, Dearest, if I say
Mother's love will take no nay.'

As she ceased, the gentle Virgin
Clasp'd the Infant to her breast,
And upon His radiant forehead
Many a loving kiss impress'd:
Jesus woke, and on her face
Fix'd a look of heavenly grace.

Ah! that look, those eyes, that beauty,
How they pierce the Mother's heart!
Shafts of love from every feature
Through her gentle bosom dart.
Heart of stone! can I behold
Mary's love, and still be cold?

Where, my soul, thy sense, thy reason?
When will these delays be o'er?
All things else, how fair so ever,
Are but smoke: resist no more!
Yes! 'tis done! I yield my arms
Captive to those double charms.

If, alas, O heavenly beauty!
Now so late those charms I learn,
Now at least, and ever, ever
With thy love my heart will burn

For the Mother and the Child,
Rose and Lily undefiled.

Plant and fruit, and fruit and blossom,
I am theirs, and they are mine;
For no other prize I labour,
For no other bliss I pine;
Love can every pain requite,
Love alone is full delight.

The Mother of Sorrows.

'O vos omnes qui transitis per viam, attendite, et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus.'

'O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow.' Lamentations i. 12.

O ye who pass along the way
All joyous, where with grief I pine,
In pity pause awhile, and say,
Was ever sorrow like to mine.

See, hanging here before my eyes,
This body, bloodless, bruised, and torn,—
Alas! it is my Son who dies,
Of love deserving, not of scorn.

For know, this weak and dying man
Is Son of Him who made the earth,
And me, before the world began,
He chose to give Him human birth.

He is my God! and since that night
When first I saw His infant grace,
My soul has feasted on the light,
The beauty of that heavenly face.

For He had chosen me to be
The loved companion of His heart;
And, ah, how that dear company
With love transpierced me like a dart!

And now behold this loving Son
Is dying in a woe so great,
The very stones are moved to moan
In sorrow at His piteous state.

Where'er His failing eyes are bent,
A friend to help He seeks in vain;
All, all on vengeance are intent,
And eager to increase His pain.

Eternal Father! God of Love!
Behold Thy Son! ah, see His woe!
Canst Thou look down from heaven above,
And for Thy Son no pity show?

But, no—that Father sees His Son
Clothed with the sins of guilty men;
And spares not that Belovèd One,
Though dying on His cross of pain.

My Son! my Son! could I at least
Console Thee in this hour of death,
Could I but lay Thee on my breast,
And there receive Thy parting breath!

Alas! no comfort I impart;
Nay, rather this my vain regret
But rends still more Thy loving heart,
And makes Thy death more bitter yet.

Ah, loving souls! love, love that God
Who all inflamed with love expires;
On you His life He has bestowed;
Your love is all that He desires.

THE DEATH OF MARY.

Uplift the voice, and sing
The Daughter and the Spouse,
The Mother of the King
To whom creation bows!

Praise to Mary, endless praise!
Raise your joyful voices, raise!
Praise to God who reigns above,
Who has made her for His love.

When Mary linger'd yet,
An exile from her Son,
Like fairest lily, set
'Mid thorns of earth alone,
Praise to Mary, &c.

To be with God on high,
Her heart was all on fire;
She sought and ask'd to die,
With humble sweet desire.
Praise to Mary, &c.

At length her Heavenly Spouse,
Who loved her with such love,
Invites her to repose
With Him in heaven above.
Praise to Mary, &c.

She waits till Death appear,
And let her spirit go;
But Death approach'd with fear,
And dared not strike the blow.
Praise to Mary, &c.

Then came sweet Love from heaven,
And with his flaming dart
The mortal wound was given
To Mary's stainless heart.
Praise to Mary, &c.

Pierced by the deadly wound,
She gently bow'd her head;
Pining with love she swoon'd,
And, lo, her spirit fled.
Praise to Mary, &c.

Then did that beauteous Dove
Spring joyfully on high;
Her Son receives with love,
And bears her to the sky.
Praise to Mary, &c.

And now, bright Queen of Love!
While seated on thy throne,
High in the realms above,
Near to thy glorious Son,
Praise to Mary, &c.

Hear, from that blest abode,
A sinner cries to thee;
Teach me to love that God
Who bears such love to me.
Praise to Mary, &c.

The Assumption of Mary.

Fly, my soul, with Mary fly,
Soar beyond the golden sky,
Mount to Mary's throne on high.

Bright the queenly crown she won,
Sweet the reign she has begun,
As she stands beside her Son.
Fly, my soul, &c.

How endure this long delay?
Living here, how can I stay
From such beauty far away?
Fly, my soul, &c.

Sad my lot is here below;
Who can hope or life bestow?
Who will help or pity show?
Fly, my soul, &c.

But, though far away from me,
Still our sovereign Queen will be
Full of love and clemency.
Fly, my soul, &c.

With a mother's loving care
She will lift those hands so fair,
And will save us by her prayer.
Fly, my soul, &c.

Mother's heart can ne'er forget
That we are her children yet,
By such dangers fierce beset.
Fly, my soul, &c.

Gently, still, she bends her eyes
On the soul that longs and sighs
For her love, the heavenly prize.
Fly, my soul, &c.

Blest that soul who, like the dove,
Borne upon the wings of love,
Follows her to heaven above.
Fly, my soul, &c.

Invocation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Time of Temptation.

Haste, my Mother, run to help me;
Mother, haste, do not delay;
See from hell the envious serpent
Comes my trembling soul to slay.

Ah! his very look affrights me,
And his cruel rage I fear;
Whither fly, if he attacks me?
See him, see him coming near!

Lo! I faint away with terror,
For if yet thou dost delay,
He will dart at me his venom;
Then, alas! I am his prey.

Cries and tears have naught avail'd me,
Spite of all I see him there;
Saints I call till I am weary,
Still he stands with threat'ning air.

Now his mighty jaws are open,
And his forkèd tongue I see;
Ah! he coils to spring upon me,—
Mother! hasten, make him flee.

Mary! yes, the name of Mary
Strikes with dread my cruel foe;
Straight he flees, as from the sunbeam
Swiftly melts the winter's snow.

Now he's gone; but do thou ever
Stay beside me, Mother dear;
Then the hellish fiend to tempt me
Never more will venture near.

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